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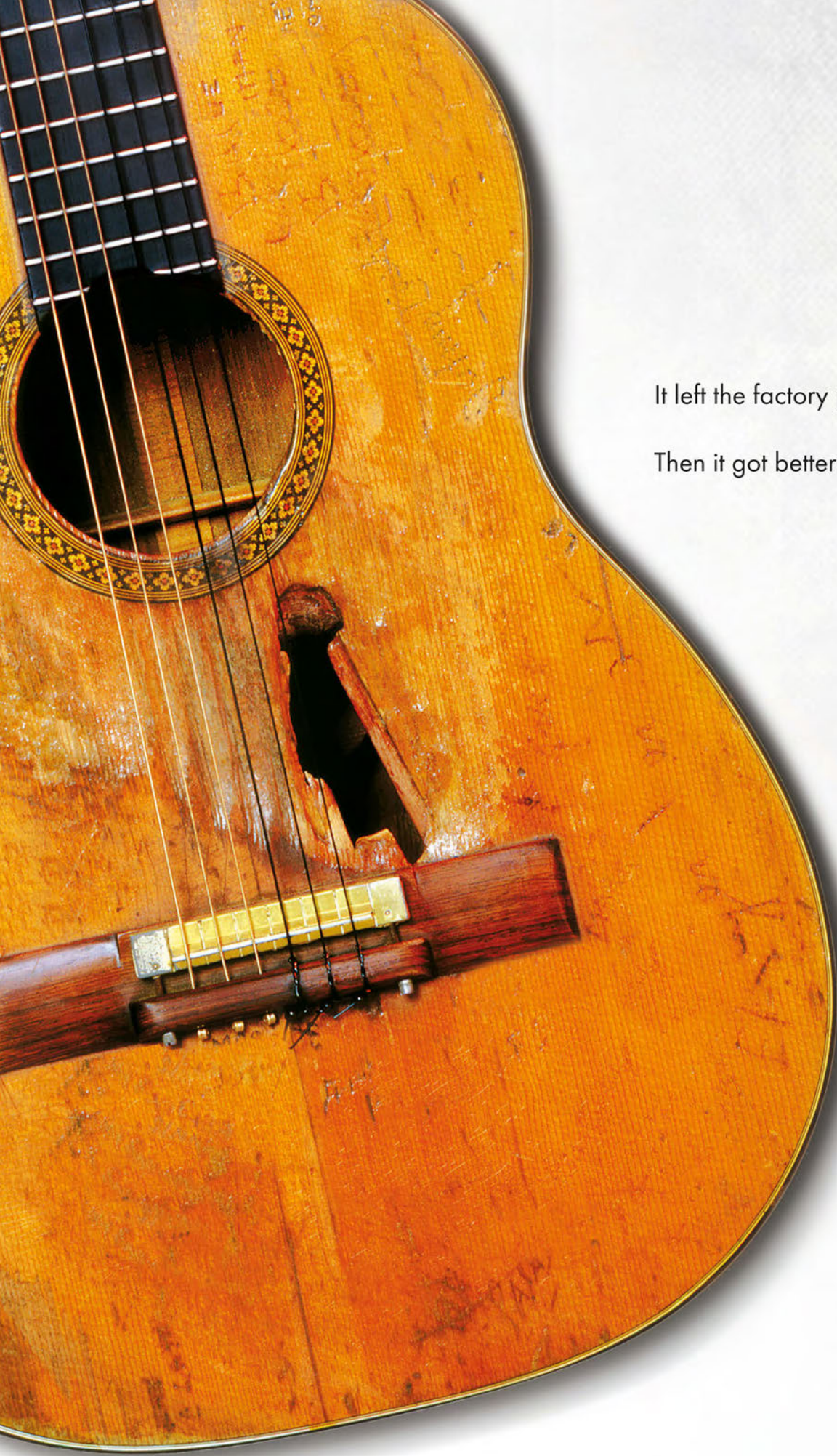


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Issue 108 August 2015

Editor: Guy Little

Email: guy@blazepublishing.co.uk

Sub-editor: Nick Robbins

Advertising Sales Manager: Florence Thornton-Weeks

Email: florentetw@blazepublishing.co.uk

Tel: 01926 339808

Design: Chris Sweeney, Jessica Riley

Studio Gear Photography: Eckie

Columnists: Raymond Burley, Clive Carroll, Mike Dawes, Richard Gilewitz, Chris Gibbons, Gordon Giltrap, Daniel Ho, Leon Hunt, Thomas Leeb, David Mead, Matt Stevens, Chris Woods.

Writers: Paul Brett, Stephen Bennett, Graham Hazelwood, Andy Hughes, Leon Hunt, Guy Little, Alun Lower, Joel McIver, David Mead, Julian Piper, Teri Saccone, Nick Robbins, Paul Strange, Richard Thomas, Tom Christopher, Sam Wise.

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A LITTLE WORD

We've had many great artists grace our London Acoustic Show over the years, but this year is set to be the best one yet. We've packed so much into the two-day event (September 12 and 13) at Olympia London, with masterclasses and main stage performances from some of the world's greatest players. You'll find interviews with everyone gracing the stages over the weekend in this issue.

It's an honour to host some legends of the music world, including the venerable Albert Lee, who you'll see on this issue's cover. Albert's career has been one that dreams are made of – I mean, just imagine backing the Everly Brothers, right? Standing on that stage looking out past Don and Phil... Albert will be appearing on the main stage in association with LR Baggs and Ernie Ball to talk about his illustrious career and to play tracks from his new acoustic album *Highwayman*. He'll be bringing his Huss & Dalton acoustic and a whole load of stories from the road of rock n' roll, no doubt.

Doyle Dykes is a man who can coax sounds out of his instrument not heard anywhere else. You'll remember Doyle from his column in these pages, but it's a pleasure to have him fly to the UK especially for our show. He's not often this side of the Atlantic, so make sure you check him out in the masterclass suite and on the main stage.

We've reviewed guitars in this issue that you'll be able to try out over the show weekend, too. Check out the stand number on the corresponding review to locate them on the show floor. The guitar I couldn't put down this month was the Waterloo by Collings. Bill Collings has always been infatuated with

guitars – and not just expensive ones. When he first started building, the guitars of the 20s and 30s would intrigue him – the character, the tone... The issue was that they rarely played well. These Depression-era guitars were mainly sold via catalogues and mail order under all different kinds of sub-brand guitar names (Kalamazoo and Gibson, for instance). This is where we meet Waterloo by Collings. The Waterloo range is an authentic remake of a Depression-era guitar; they have the Kalamazoo-style aesthetics: glue globs, matte finish, vintage styling and a unique tone and character. This isn't a venture for Bill Collings to simply sell more guitars; it's the lovechild of his passion for building great guitars and his enduring curiosity surrounding pre-war instruments. They're certainly an interesting addition to the Collings stable – and they're all made in the workshop in Texas, USA, so there's no compromise on build quality and attention to detail. I fell in love with the ladder-braced WL-14 LTR Waterloo we had in for review – and I'm sure you'll fall in love with it too. Check out the review on page 54 and read our interview with Bill from the Sarzana guitar meeting in Italy over on page 92.

Enjoy the issue and see you at the London Acoustic Show on September 12 and 13 at Olympia London.

Guy Little
Editor

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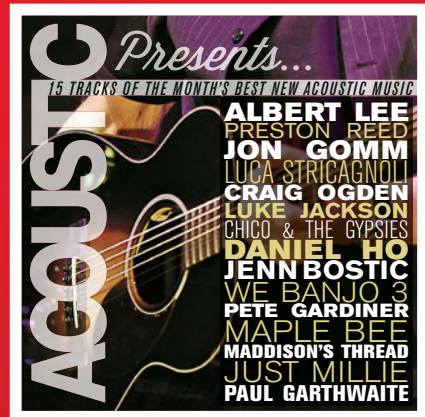


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ACOUSTIC Presents...

15 TRACKS
OF THE MONTH'S
BEST NEW
ACOUSTIC MUSIC



01

ALBERT LEE – 'EIGHTEEN YELLOW ROSES'

Described as the "ultimate virtuoso" by Eric Clapton, Albert Lee is set to appear on the London

Acoustic Show's main stage on Saturday 12 September 2015 in association with LR Baggs and Ernie Ball to perform tracks from his new album *Highwayman* and to talk about his enduring career as one of the greatest guitar players alive. Recent accolades include Grammys for contributions on Earl Scrugg's *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* and Brad Paisley's *Cluster Pluck* and also appearing on stage at the "Concert For George" with music legends Sir Paul McCartney, Tom Petty, and Eric Clapton.

- www.albertlee.co.uk
- www.facebook.com/albertleeofficial
- @ALeeofficial



06

LUKE JACKSON – 'MISSPENT HISTORY'

Luke is a young roots singer-songwriter from Canterbury, Kent, who in 2013 was nominated in the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards

for both the Horizon Award for best emerging talent and the young folk category. With a bold, distinctive voice and a sweet, percussive guitar style, Luke is a confident and captivating live performer. He was also winner of Fatea's male artist of the year 2014. Over the past few years, Luke has steadily been developing a reputation for himself in the folk and roots circuits either through his solo shows, many festival appearances or when opening for such luminaries as Show of Hands, Steve Knightley, Martyn Joseph, Karine Polwart, Oysterband, Paul Brady, Glenn Tilbrook, Sarah Jarosz and Lucy Ward.

- www.lukepauljackson.com
- www.facebook.com/lukepauljacksonmusic
- @lukepauljackson



11

PETE GARDINER – 'IDOLS'

Pete is a singer-songwriter from Northern Ireland. He has had a passion for music since the age of six when he first heard Slash

play the opening three chords of 'Knocking On Heavens' Door' and knew then music was going to play a major role in his life. He writes about his circumstances at any given moment, his relationships, doomed love affairs, news stories that hit him hard and pretty much any idea that comes into his head that he thinks is worth noting down. Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and Bruce Springsteen are three of the greatest influences in his life. Pete has just finished recording his debut album with award-winning Irish producer Tommy McLaughlin. His first single 'Idols' will be released in August.

- www.petegardiner.co.uk
- www.facebook.com/thepetegardiner
- @thepetegardiner



02

PRESTON REED – 'DELAYED TRAIN'

One of the most influential guitarists in the world, Preston Reed has captivated audiences globally for almost

three decades with the two-handed integrated percussive style he began developing in the 1980s. He's a direct influence on many of today's best-known acoustic players including Andy McKee and Jon Gomm. Preston's timeless compositions are as unique as his execution. Blues, rock, metal, funk, jazz and classical styles are distilled into a visual and sonic experience – a border-hopping musical language that tells stories without words. Reed continues to define the sound of the pioneering compositional guitar genre.

- www.prestonreed.com
- www.facebook.com/prestonreedmusic
- @prestonreed



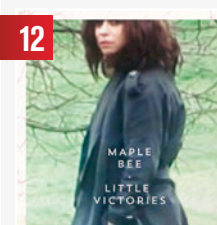
07

CHICO AND THE GYPSIES – 'AMOR DE MIS AMORES'

Chico Bouchikhi – co-founder of The Gipsy Kings and co-writer of their biggest hits

('Djebi Djoba', 'Bamboléo' and 'Soy') – has built up a phenomenal worldwide audience of millions of music fans. The band's infectious brand of rumba, flamenco, Latin-pop and rock tunes is joyful, flamboyant and hugely entertaining. The architect of the Gipsy Kings' success, Chico saw them become the first French group to be awarded a platinum disc in the US and go on to sell an estimated 20 million albums, making them the biggest world music crossover act. Chico & The Gypsies will be touring the UK in October to support the release of their latest album, *Fiesta*.

- www.chicoandthegypsies.com
- www.facebook.com/chicoandthegypsiesofficial
- @chicogypsies



12

MAPLE BEE – 'NOBODY KNOWS'

Little Victories is Maple Bee's latest self-produced album of 10 melodic musical tales, dancing from the romantic longing of the

Stevie Nicks-esque 'Nobody Knows' to the struggle with sanity on the modern folk of 'Doctor' and 'To All The Lost'. From her early years spent on a round-the-world boat trip with her family, listening to the fantastical narratives of Kate Bush and Maddy Prior, to a musical her-story writing and performing in bands like Mediaeval Baebes, Maple Bee's aesthetic is unashamedly other worldly and spooky – siren call vocals and the lyrics of myth.

- www.maplebee.com
- www.facebook.com/maplebeeeofficial
- @missmaplebee

03



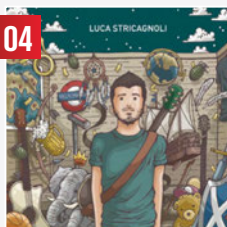
JON GOMM – 'WHAT'S LEFT FOR YOU?'

Jon Gomm is an acoustic singer-songwriter with a revolutionary virtuoso guitar style where he uses one

guitar to create drum sounds, bass lines and twisting melodies all at the same time. The emphasis is still on the soulful vocals and songwriting, and his original material is influenced by everything from Robert Johnson to Radiohead. In 2012, his song 'Passionflower' went viral online with the video passing nine million hits. Jon's released three studio albums and tours worldwide. His new album, made up of live versions of fan favourites titled *Live In The Acoustic Asylum* is set for release on September 8 2015.

- www.jongomm.com
- www.facebook.com/jongommofficial
- @jongomm

04



LUCA STRICAGNOLI – 'THUNDERSTRUCK'

Luca was born in 1991 in Varese, northern Italy. He showed great interest in playing guitar from a very young age

and took his first lesson at the age of 10. Later he decided to leave his studies to focus on learning non-conventional techniques which won him many talent shows and competitions. Luca then kept experimenting: new original techniques and the use of multiple guitars at once. At 22, Luca became part of the biggest acoustic guitar label in the world, CandyRat Records, and his videos reached an incredible amount of views on YouTube. The real deal arrives with an AC/DC arrangement, 'Thunderstruck', receiving 10 million views and counting on different social networks in just a few weeks.

- www.candyrat.com/artists/LucaStricagnoli/
- www.facebook.com/lucastricagnolifanpage
- @candyratrecords

05



CRAIG OGDEN – 'I GIORNI' (FEATURING JI LIU)

Australian born guitarist Craig Ogden is one of the most exciting artists of his generation. He studied guitar

from the age of seven and percussion from the age of 13. He is the youngest instrumentalist to have received a Fellowship Award from the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester. One of the UK's most recorded guitarists, his recordings for Virgin/EMI, Chandos, Nimbus, Hyperion, Sony and Classic FM have received wide acclaim. His latest CD *Craig Ogden and Friends* is out now. Craig Ogden has performed concertos with all of the main UK orchestras plus many abroad and has presented on BBC Radio 3 and on ABC Classic FM (Australia).

- www.craigogden.com
- www.facebook.com/craigogdenguitar
- @craig_ogden

08



DANIEL HO – 'PEACE OF THE OCEAN'

Daniel Ho's simple philosophy of presenting music with sincerity and artistry encompasses six consecutive Grammy awards,

number-one albums on national airplay charts, and top-10 albums on Billboard. In 2010, his solo ukulele CD, *Polani (Pure)*, was the first ukulele album in music history to receive a Grammy nomination. On piano, the following year, he received a nomination for best pop instrumental album for his CD, *E Kahe Malie (Flowing Gently)*. Most recently, in 2012, Daniel's album *On A Gentle Island Breeze* was nominated for a Grammy in the world music category. A Honolulu native, Daniel performs original songs in English and Hawaiian that feature his versatility on ukulele, slack key guitar, and piano.

- www.danielho.com
- www.facebook.com/DanielHoPage
- @danielho888

09



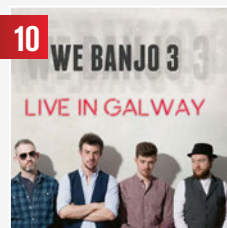
JENN BOSTIC – 'I DON'T LIKE YOU AT ALL'

Jenn Bostic's new album, *Faithful*, signals an assured confidence. You can hear how that outpouring of fan love has

freed the Nashville-based singer-songwriter to trust more fully in her instincts as an artist, a perspective reflected in the disc's anthemic title track, which takes up the idea of keeping faith with yourself. This thread is woven throughout *Faithful*, in large part a meditation on inner-strength and how your response to what life throws at you defines your character. In Jenn's case, that's meant not throwing in the towel when her early work was rejected by so-called star-makers and not resting on her laurels when her song 'Jealous Of The Angels' connected with an audience unimagined by those same industry figures.

- www.jennbostic.com
- www.facebook.com/jennbostic
- @jennbostic

10



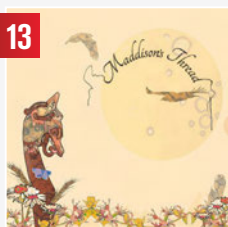
WE BANJO 3 – 'GET ONBOARD' (LIVE)

One of the best live acts to come out of Ireland in recent years, the multi-award-winning We Banjo 3 combine

supergroup credentials with a breath-taking command of the emotive power of fiddle, guitar, mandolin and banjo. Any single member of this group could electrify a venue with a solo performance, but together, in the joyous musical alchemy of We Banjo 3, their passionate lead vocalist is like a young Springsteen adopted by the Chieftans, the result is truly unforgettable. On both sides of the Atlantic, the word is out about this group. And along with the buzz, the same refrain is always heard: "See them while you can." We Banjo 3: the new gold standard of traditional Irish and American roots music.

- www.webanjo3.com
- www.facebook.com/webanjo3
- @webanjo3

13



MADDISON'S THREAD – 'THE VIKING'S DAUGHTER'

'I was unemployed living in a London bedsit when I began playing acoustic guitar. I'd been like a grasshopper

flitting from one genre to another until I alighted upon John Martyn's *The Tumbler* and Cat Stevens' *Tea for the Tillerman*. I was hooked on the earthy organic flavour of the acoustic guitar and, being a romantic, lyrics that reflected the idyllic garden in my head. I thought, "I can do that" as you do. And here I am, a mental health nurse with a soul searching but uplifting debut CD coloured by some wonderfully accomplished musicians.' – Maddison's Thread.

- www.maddisonstthread.com
- www.facebook.com/leemaddisonmusic
- @maddisonstthread

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JUST MILLIE – 'NOT OK'

Performing since the age of 13, Just Millie has an enchanting voice. She packs a punch with her acoustic guitar, harmonies,

looping pedals and an electronic kick drum. Her new AA side single 'Lanterns / Not OK' is a homage to believing in the power to succeed, being determined, beating the odds, going against the grain and proving people wrong. This girl shows early potential to become a voice of her generation. Expect the unexpected, she's not your average singer songwriter; she's Just Millie.

- www.justmillie.co.uk
- www.facebook.com/justmilliemusic
- @justmilliemusic

15



PAUL GARTHWAITE – 'THORN FROM A ROSE'

'Thorn From A Rose' is taken from the album *Up Close And Personal* recorded at Peter Gabriel's Real World studios.

The album features 10-, 14- and 22-string guitars made by Andy Manson. The 14- and 22-string guitars are the only ones in the world. 'I have always been fascinated by solo guitarists such as Segovia and Joe Pass and I had the good fortune to see Isaac Guillory when I was 19. This experience changed my life. He had everything: great songs, great voice immaculate arrangements and he is quite simply one of the finest musicians I have ever had the pleasure to see. I have seen him play about 40 times and every time he was stunning,' says Paul.

- www.paulgarthwaitemusic.com
- www.facebook.com/paulgarthwaitemusic.com
- @PGarthwaite

LONDON ACOUSTIC SHOW 2015 INTERVIEWS

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For decades, Albert Lee has added his chicken pickin' licks to the music of Emmylou Harris, Eric Clapton and the Everly Brothers, and now he has brought out a stripped down acoustic album - we catch up ahead of his London Acoustic Show performance...



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With over 12 million YouTube views for their take on AC/DC's 'Thunderstruck', Steve 'N' Seagulls bring their unique style to the UK for the 2015 London Acoustic Show...



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Alison Richter spends an afternoon with legendary US picker Doyle Dykes ahead of his London Acoustic Show performance to talk about Olson Guitars, LR Baggs, and his inimitable technique.

GUITAR TECHNIQUES

Improve your playing with our techniques section...

With 10 pages of different level-specific techniques, whether you're a novice or an expert our columns have something for everyone.

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Mastering country guitar: brush up your country chops in this new six-part series.

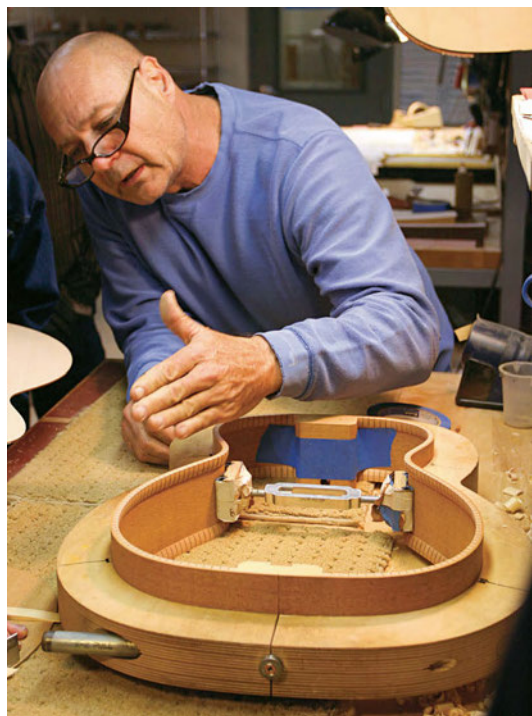
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Born of Bill Collings' fascination for Depression-era guitars comes the new line from the Austin guitar maker; Guy Little ponders over a ladder-braced Waterloo.

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64 LEWIS MANDOLIN

Alun Lower has the latest on the new Lewis mandolins – a culmination of over 30 years' instrument design experience from Leeds-based luthier, Martyn Banks of Oakwood instruments.

68 RAINSONG WS1000

An all-graphite guitar without so much as a shaving of wood, braces, struts or, well, anything we know about guitars other than its shape – this can't be right, can it? Guy Little has the answers.

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80 AUDEN 12-STRING

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NEWS DESK

ACOUSTIC BRINGS YOU ALL OF THE LATEST PRODUCTS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ACOUSTIC MUSIC.

ALBERT LEE TUNES UP FOR THE LONDON ACOUSTIC SHOW 2015

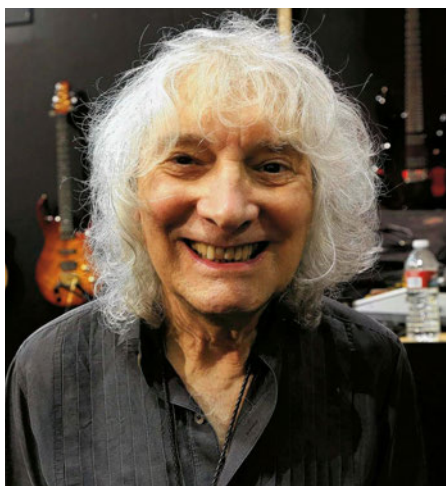
Will appear on Saturday 12 September with LR Baggs and Ernie Ball

Described as the "ultimate virtuoso" by Eric Clapton, Albert Lee is set to appear on the London Acoustic Show's main stage on Saturday 12 September 2015 in association with LR Baggs and Ernie Ball to perform tracks from his new album *Highwayman* and to talk about his enduring career as one of the greatest guitar players alive.

Albert Lee was heavily involved in the emerging London rock n' roll scene in the 1960s, and cut his teeth gigging with the

likes of Jimmy Page, Bob Xavier and Chris Farlowe & The Thunderbirds before forming Heads, Hands & Feet with Chas Hodges. The US eventually beckoned as he became more involved in country music, touring with the Crickets, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Emmons and Joe Cocker. Albert replaced James Burton (Elvis' guitar player) in Emmylou Harris' Hot Band, and on his return to London in the late 70s he joined Eric Clapton. He played on the Everly Brothers' Royal Albert Hall reunion concert in 1983 and subsequently toured with them. Recent accolades include Grammys for contributions on Earl Scrugg's *Foggy Mountain Breakdown* and Brad Paisley's *Cluster Pluck* and also appearing on stage at the "Concert For George" with music legends Sir Paul McCartney, Tom Petty, and Eric Clapton.

The London Acoustic Show takes place at London Olympia over September 12-13, 2015. Also appearing are: Doyle Dykes, Antoine Dufour (in association with Ernie Ball), Luca Stricagnoli, Steve 'N' Seagulls, Daniel Ho (in association with Yamaha Music London), Martin Carthy, Jon Gomm (in association with Fishman and JHS), Preston Reed, and Leon Hunt. Tickets are available now starting at £17.50 from www.londonacousticshow.com



NEW MODELS FROM C.F. MARTIN & CO. ANNOUNCED AT SUMMER NAMM

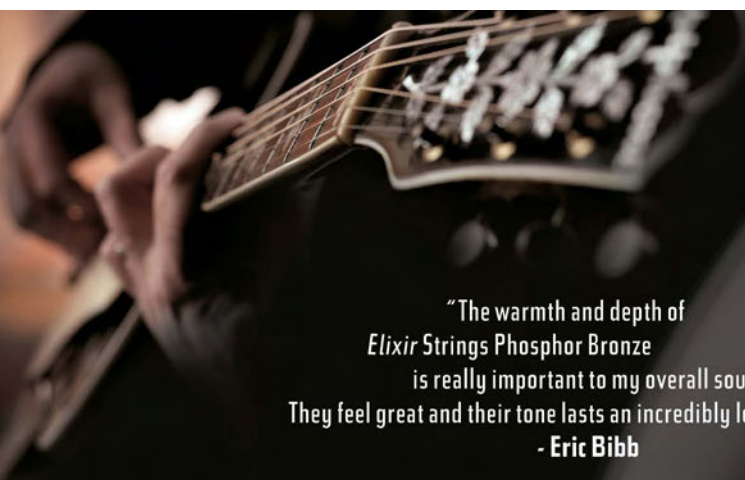
Guitars showcased include the 00-15E Retro and the LE-Cowboy-2015

C. F. Martin & Co. has announced a raft of new models fresh from the Summer NAMM show in Nashville, Tennessee. The iconic guitar manufacturer unveiled the 00-15E Retro and the LE-Cowboy-2015.

The addition of the 00-15E Retro to the Retro Series is the first 00-14 fret instrument in the product family. It's an acoustic-electric, non-cutaway model features a solid mahogany top, back and sides and the top is finished with a distinctive 15-style burst. Equipped with their popular SP Lifespan strings and Fishman F1 Aura+ electronics, the 00-15E Retro will appeal to players at all levels seeking incredible tone and playability.

The LE-Cowboy-2015 features a design on the body by famed watercolorist William Matthews. It is a 000-12 fret with a Sitka spruce top finished with Martin's Vintage Tone System. The top is inlaid with a multi-colour rope design, and the back and sides are made of goncalo alves. This collector's guitar will only be sold in 2015.

Previously announced models include additions to the D-35 range to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the iconic dreadnought. www.martinguitar.com



"The warmth and depth of Elixir Strings Phosphor Bronze is really important to my overall sound. They feel great and their tone lasts an incredibly long time."
- Eric Bibb



www.elixirstings.co.uk/products



TC ELECTRONIC INTRODUCES BODYREZ ACOUSTIC PICKUP ENHANCER

BodyRez is designed to enhance the sound of acoustic guitars with under-saddle pickups

A common problem for acoustic guitarists is that once they plug their acoustic instruments into a PA, their beautiful and natural acoustic tone is suddenly turned into a super sensitive and flat-sounding, quacky mess. BodyRez is designed to fix that problem.

Through a vast amount of pre-configured filters and the use of subtle compression, BodyRez restores the natural tone and feel of acoustic instruments with just a turn of a single knob.

In addition, BodyRez has a built-in phase reversal feature which helps destroy low-end feedback and a mute function for noiseless removal of cables when switching guitars on stage. All of these features have been distilled into an ultra-compact and easy to use true-bypass stompbox that'll fit into any rig. Getting studio-quality acoustic tones on stage is seemingly here!

The BodyRez features studio-quality acoustic guitar tone, restores natural playing feel, has built-in feedback suppression, mute function, ultra-compact design, true bypass switch, and a 9V power supply included. The BodyRez will be available from September 29 at £70. www.tcelectronic.com



SANTA CRUZ GUITAR COMPANY DEBUTS BRAD PAISLEY SIGNATURE MODEL

SCGC has also announced their new Parabolic Tension Strings

Brad Paisley and the Santa Cruz Guitar Company has announced the debut of the Brad Paisley Signature guitar at the 2015 Summer NAMM show in Nashville, Tennessee. Paisley's decision to partner with a shop as small as Santa Cruz Guitar Company, who makes approximately 600 guitars a year, came from his desire to be associated with quality and responsibility above all else. He wanted his name on a handmade instrument that his fans and guitar aficionados alike could trust.

Richard Hoover, owner and founder of SCGC, worked closely with Paisley to design a personalised, custom dreadnought based on SCGC's Pre-War Dreadnought model. The Paisley signature model honours Paisley's dedication to the sustainability of treasured tonewoods, built with his preferred customisations for playability, tone and look in mind.

The Brad Paisley signature model B/PW specifications are: Sustainable yield, master grade East Indian Rosewood and Bear Claw Sitka spruce; 14-fret, 25.375" scale length, 1-3/4" nut width, 2-3/16" bridge spacing, custom voiced/advanced X-bracing, herringbone rosette and top purfling, ebony peghead overlay with custom cowboy hat inlay, vintage tinted top, Waverly tuners, Santa Cruz Parabolic Mid-Tension Strings, and tooled leather black custom guitar case.

SCGC has also announced the release of Santa Cruz Parabolic Tension Strings. This project has been a decade in the making; commercially available strings were never able to truly complement the complexity of overtones and sustain that SCGC achieves by individually tap tuning and hand voicing each guitar. SCGC therefore sought out the



wisdom of their friends and colleagues within the audiological sciences to collaborate on a new design that will fully drive the Santa Cruz Guitar Company's complex acoustic tone. Santa Cruz Strings are engineered to put the exact tension on each individual string to create the appropriate download pressure. These calculated tensions determine the optimal relative volume between strings, or EQ, for your instrument. Santa Cruz Strings require precise core to wrap ratios and precision fit and finish for unprecedented tolerances of one half of one thousandths of an inch.

For more information on Santa Cruz Parabolic Tension Strings and the Brad Paisley signature model, visit: www.santacruzguitar.com

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Closing date for the Avalon competition is 23 September 2015. The winner will be announced 24 September 2015.

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*Competition entries must arrive no later than the closing date specified. The winner will be announced on 24 September 2015. Only the winner will be contacted. One entry per household. Image(s) of winner may be used for future editorial or advertising purposes. The winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries. No cash alternative is offered. Acoustic magazine reserves the right to substitute the prize for an alternative of equal or greater value.



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MARTY WAS AN ASPIRING SONGWRITER. ONE DAY, HE DECIDED TO HAMMER A NAIL INTO A WALL. "THIS IS WHERE I WILL HANG MY FIRST GOLD RECORD," HE DECLARED—WHICH WAS A BOLD PROCLAMATION, ESPECIALLY COMING FROM A GUY WHOSE NEXT BEST OPTION WAS A JOB WRITING TOASTER MANUALS. FOR SIX LONG YEARS HE WALKED BY THAT EMPTY NAIL. AND SO DID HIS WIFE AND THREE KIDS. THIS TOOK GUTS. PARTICULARLY AFTER EATING MASHED POTATOES COVERED IN 69-CENT GRAVY FROM A PACKET. BUT MARTY PERSEVERED. FOCUSED ON SUCCESS. UNTIL ONE DAY, A GOLD RECORD HUNG ON THAT NAIL, AND THEN A PLATINUM NEXT TO IT. HIS STORY REMINDS US THAT THE WORLD COULD USE MORE DREAMERS LIKE MARTY. *For more on Marty and other stories of courage that inspire us, visit taylorguitars.com*



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EXPLORING COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Copyright can seem bewildering at times; a darkened maze from which there is no escape for even the most seasoned of pros. To save you from a potential copyright headache, consider a few copyright basics and how they might affect you.

WHAT IS COPYRIGHT AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

Copyright, governed in the UK by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 (CDPA), exists to protect owners of intellectual property against other people copying or exploiting their work without permission. Copyright is an automatic right, and protects intellectual property such as musical works, lyrics and sound recordings.

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2. The sound recording itself – the copyright in the sound recording is owned by the producer of the recording (often the record label);
3. The musicians' performances contained within the recording – performers' rights are "related rights" that are protected by the CDPA; this means any recording of your performance requires your consent and warrants payment. Subsequent exploitation of the recording, for example in a feature film or advert, warrants further payment.

If you're involved in any stage of the creative process, whether it's writing lyrics or performing on a track, it's worth getting to grips with copyright basics and knowing how it applies to your work.

HOW CAN THE MU HELP?

The MU can answer any general copyright questions you might have and offer advice on protecting your copyright. If you write music, we can provide sample rates and contracts for the use of your work in various media.

Our copyright registration service can help you record your copyright and prove ownership of your work. As it's an automatic right you don't have to register copyright by law, but there is no copyright in an intangible idea. Anything you create must be recorded somehow, for example as written music and lyrics or an audio recording.

For performers, we have standard rates and contracts for the recording of your performances and negotiate, collect and distribute fees for the synchronisation of your existing recorded performances into various media.

Copyright law is always playing catch up to new ways of accessing content, and decisions made by governments can sometimes undermine copyright and, subsequently, performers' rights. The MU lobbies decision makers and defends these rights on a daily basis on behalf of all of our 30,000 members.

Understanding the basics can be enough to help you navigate your way out of the darkness, but if you have any questions about copyright, get in touch.

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LEON HUNT

We chat to Leon Hunt about banjo pickups, Béla Fleck, and playing Charlie Gaisford's pre-war Gibson PB-75.

As one reviewer once observed, "being the best five-string banjo player in the UK must be rather like being the fastest 'fast-bowler' in Virginia". Leon Hunt has, for more than a decade, continued to confound that notion (and the many stereotypes that attempt to confine the five-string banjo to bluegrass music) by making his living playing alongside some of the world's top musicians from a number of musical styles, backgrounds and disciplines. Since graduating from a music and music technology degree in 2000, Leon has taken part in several notable transatlantic recordings. These projects have included some of the biggest names in American traditional music: Viktor Krauss, Tim O'Brien, Stuart Duncan, David Grier and Matt Flinner to name a few. Beyond proving his bluegrass credentials, Leon has found himself in a diverse array of other musical settings; occasional live and recorded collaborations with Irish traditional music's Michael McGoldrick and Flook; African Kora virtuoso, Sekou Kieta; and folk singer, Kate Rusby.

Was the banjo the first instrument that you learned to play?

Apart from some casual noodling on an old Les Paul copy I had as a kid, yes. I bought my first banjo at 17 and was completely obsessed by the time I was 18.

What kind of music did you grow up with?

It was pretty much all punk; the Clash, the Sex Pistols, the Damned etc. but both my parents were jazz musicians so I was exposed to a lot of that as a kid too. At the time I hated it, or at least I thought I did. It's pretty clear which of the two styles has had the biggest influence on my musical life. It's funny how things work out.

Tell me about the learning process of the banjo for you – did you take formal lessons?

Yes, I was very lucky with tutors. I began learning from a great local player called Simon Fossey. About a year or so later, I started traveling around with, and learning from, a great banjo player called Charlie Gaisford. Charlie was the "go to" session banjo player in the UK throughout the 70s. He's probably best known for all *The Benny Hill Show* sessions he did. A few years later, I had the opportunity to travel to Nashville and take some lessons from Béla Fleck. Béla was a fantastic teacher and set me on the musical path I've been on ever since.

Looking at all the different aspects of the banjo and learning to play it, is there anything particular about it you enjoy the most?

I love interesting chord sequences and finding cool and economical ways through them. Spending time puzzling your way through a jazz chart can teach you so much, even if you have no interest in playing that particular tune. I'm also a born again Earl Scruggs fan. I recently had to revisit his music for a recording project and I'd forgotten just how great he was.

What kind of advice would you give someone who is first picking up the banjo to learn?

Listen to as much banjo music as possible and be careful who you learn from. YouTube is awash with fairly average banjo players with bad habits who are desperate to teach you how to play like them. Bad habits picked up early on can really hamper your progress. There are very few things more soul destroying than having to spend valuable time unlearning a bad habit.

What is your take on traditional methods of playing the banjo?

Bluegrass is often described as a traditional style, but I've never been convinced that it's been around long enough to truly qualify. I don't play any of the older styles like clawhammer but I do listen to them.

How do you think the older or heritage image

of the banjo is changing now?

It's funny, I've been playing for almost 30 years now and it seems like there's always been something slightly mainstream that's destined to change people's perception of the banjo. The truth is, on the whole, people actually like the sound of the banjo but the image might take a few more decades to shake off, at least to the point where the "cool kids" will want to play one. It might be slightly less embarrassing to be a banjo player in the 21st century, but not much.

What is your preferred banjo pickup?

I use a blended system, mixing a Fishman Rare Earth pickup with an internal Crown back electret mic with a Pendulum SPS-1 preamp.

Do you use an amp or go straight into the PA?

It depends on the situation. If the rest of the band are using backline, usually if there's a drummer onstage, I'll plug into my acoustic amp. If it's a quieter musical setting such as a string band of some kind, I'll send my blended signal to the PA.

What about strings and picks?

I have an endorsement deal with GHS; I use their "Almost Medium" set. I just use ordinary metal Dunlop finger picks on my index and middle fingers and a Golden Gate plastic thumb pick.

Tell me about your current banjo collection and your go-to banjo...

I'm not much of a banjo collector, but I do still have Charlie Gaisford's old pre-war Gibson PB-75. Charlie died in an accident around 20 years ago and until about five years ago it was my main instrument. I've since gone into business with The Fairfield Banjo Company. We produce high-end banjos that are traditional in essence but have a few subtle tweaks that bring them more in line with the developments other modern stringed instruments have enjoyed in recent years, mostly enhancing playability.

Catch Leon in the masterclass suite at the London Acoustic Show on Saturday 12 September 2015.
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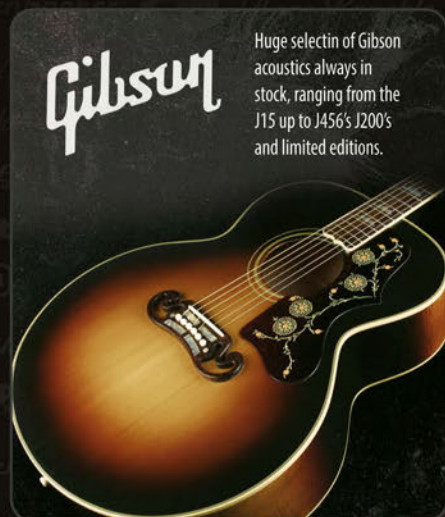
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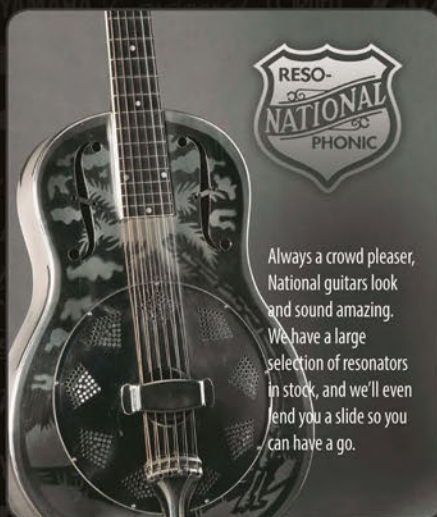
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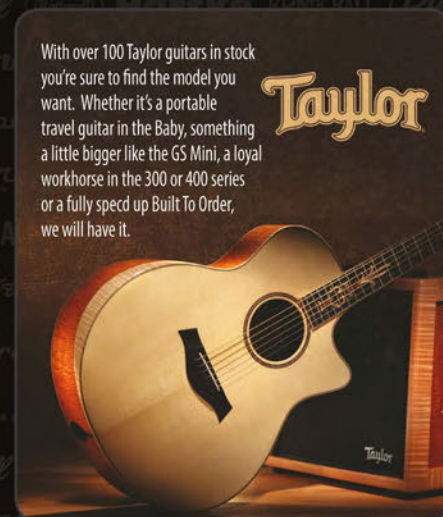
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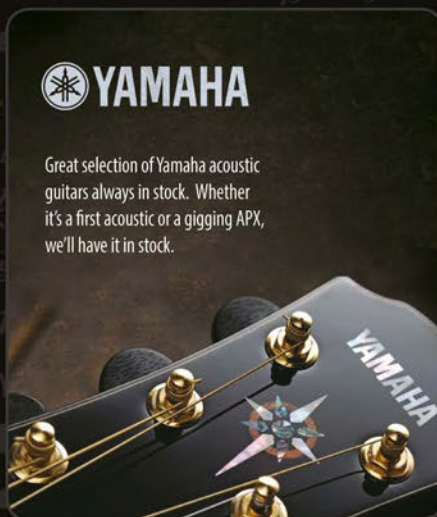
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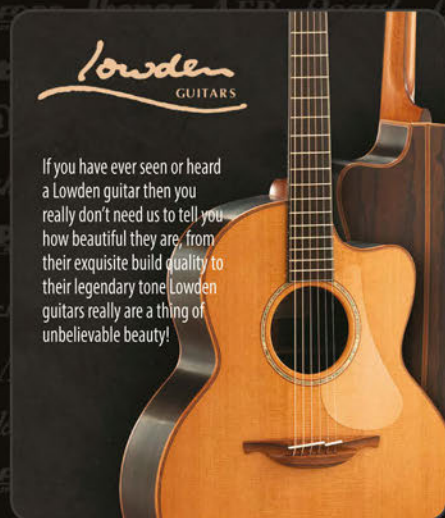
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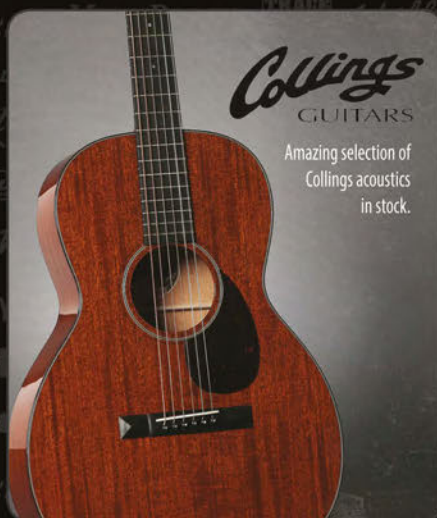
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MARTIN CARTHY

We talk to folk legend Martin Carthy ahead of his main stage appearance at the London Acoustic Show on Sunday 13 September 2015.

For more than 40 years, Martin Carthy has been one of folk music's greatest innovators, one of its best loved, most enthusiastic and, at times, most quietly controversial of figures. His skill, stage presence and natural charm have won him many admirers, not only from within the folk scene, but also far beyond it.

Trailblazing musical partnerships with, among others, Steeleye Span, Dave Swarbrick and his award-winning wife (Norma Waterson) and daughter Eliza Carthy have resulted in more than 40 albums, but Martin has only recorded 10 solo albums. Whether in the folk clubs (which he continues to champion), on the concert stage or making TV appearances (he was the subject of the acclaimed *Originals* music documentary strand on BBC Two), there are few roles that Martin Carthy hasn't played. Perhaps, most significant of all, are his settings of traditional songs with guitar, which have influenced a generation of artists, including Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, on both sides of the Atlantic. *Q Magazine* recently called Martin "the greatest English folk song performer, writer, collector, and editor of them all. In 2014, he was awarded the lifetime achievement award at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards.

Martin is a ballad singer, a groundbreaking acoustic and electric-guitarist and an authoritative interpreter of newly composed material. He always prefers to follow an insatiable musical curiosity rather than cash in on his unrivalled position. Unsurprisingly, Martin's view is a little modest. 'I have always made it my mission to help out folk clubs. I think you have to strike a balance, while you are on a mission. I am still on a bit of a mission to be honest. This is weird music and I love

weird music and I think the public should love it as well because it is fascinating and I want to help people to understand it,' Martin says.

'I have always believed that the first time you sing a song through from beginning to end with the accompaniment, that there's a magic experience in it, and you should try and capture that if you can. I have managed it a couple of times recording but then I got cocky and fell on my face! It's a great thing to go for, but you mustn't get cocky about it.'

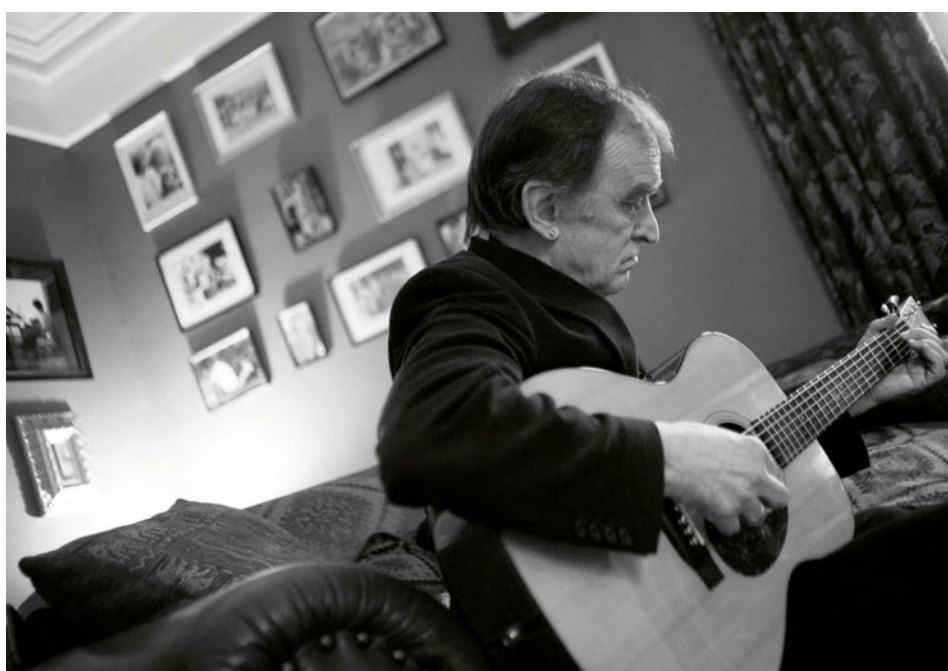
'I think when you have been a musician for a while, you learn to trust people that you work with,' Martin says. 'Being a family is a wonderful experience because you have that instinctive bond that comes from your biological link; you know how your family

member is going to go with a song or a line, or a melody, because you can feel it with them at the same time,' he says of working with his award winning daughter Eliza Carthy, with whom he recorded the duet album *The Moral Of The Elephant*. 'That is what has been so enjoyable about working with Eliza as she has grown up, but she just takes it for granted because she has never known anything different.'

The glint in Martin's eye proves – if there were any doubt – that the steel that forged Martin Carthy's determination in the 1960s is still there, strong as it ever was.

Martin plays the London Acoustic Show on Sunday 13 September 2015.

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PRESTON REED

As Preston heads to the London Acoustic Show with his signature guitar, we chat to him about his enduring relationship with luthier Mark Bailey.

As one of the most influential acoustic guitarists in the world, Preston Reed has been captivating audiences globally for almost three decades with the two-handed integrated percussive style he began developing in the 1980s. Many well known acoustic players including Andy McKee, Jon Gomm, Usman Riaz, and Kaki King cite him as influence.

How did the collaboration with Mark Bailey guitars get started?

When I came to Scotland it was to perform at the Kirkmichael International Guitar Festival in South Ayrshire. It was the second year of the festival put on by Martin Taylor and his son, which was a life-changing year, and this was where I met Catherine, my now wife. One of Mark Bailey's guitars was being offered as a first prize to the winner of the talent contest, and although I didn't meet Mark on that occasion, this was the first time I had heard about his guitars. Then, latterly, I attended a concert to perform in Ayr, and in the foyer of the venue Mark had on display some of his gorgeous archtop guitars, acoustics and electrics. This was when I met Mark for the first time. I remember drooling over the archtops, talking to him and discussing how things were going. This was the first time I had met him and saw the excellence of his work up close. All along I had been looking for a new sound and I had really wanted a guitar that was made of wood – not that I didn't love my Ovation. I called Mark and told him that what was most important to me was to have a guitar that was the same dimensions and feel of the Ovation because I really like its scale length and the neck. We ended up producing a guitar that is my design but his craftsmanship

and luthier artistry. It's just an awesome guitar and I love it. My two main acoustic guitars – a baritone and a jumbo – were made by Mark.

What are your preferred wood materials?

We talked about it a lot and I was shown all sorts of woods and tap-tested a lot of different types, but we ended up with mahogany because I just love the sound of it. The back and sides of the guitar are reclaimed mahogany. I love the fact it may have been somebody's sideboard or a church pew and now it has a new life in this wonderful guitar. The top of the guitar is cedar, which I have always loved because of its wonderful warmth. I wanted this guitar to be able to do everything – to sound aggressive when I needed it to be but also to sound soft. It's an all-purpose instrument.

What are some of the construction methods required for percussive and tapping techniques you perform?

There were several considerations. One was how it would be balanced when worn with a strap, as this guitar was designed to be played by myself when stood up. The Ovation had a counterweight inside to balance the extra neck length. Thankfully that wasn't necessary with the Bailey as it is longer in the back and it hangs perfectly without needing one. The body is a different shape and size to my Ovation. The body is tapered in so that it wraps around you. It's a sort of wedge shape and achieves the same effect as a jazz guitar archtop. It's ergonomically excellent, especially for when I am standing. If you look at it from the side, the rear part is thicker than the neck end of the guitar. It's also longer at the back and took some getting used to a slightly different playing

position when I'm stood up. I play four different guitars in my show and the only one I stand up with is the Bailey, and that's because it gives me more room to move around over the neck with my percussive playing. With the bracing patterns, Mark tried to maximise the resonance of the guitar while remembering the demanding way that I play. He had to negotiate between those two things and I think he did a fantastic job. I can feel the entire guitar working as a united organism and it's a great feeling.

Preston Reed's signature series with Mark Bailey consists of a baritone and a jumbo. For more information about this signature series, visit Mark Bailey's website. Preston Reed performs on Saturday 12 September 2015 at the London Acoustic Show.

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JON GOMM

*The story of Jon Gomm's rise to international acclaim is already a legend among players seeking their fortune on the internet – we find out how to do it ahead of the release of his new album **Live In The Acoustic Asylum...***

Once a busy musician playing clubs and pubs across the UK, the YouTube video of his tune 'Passionflower' and a single syllable appraisal – "Wow!" – posted on Twitter from no less than Stephen Fry helped propel him into the six-string stratosphere. Now busier than ever, this fiercely independent musician took time out from a hectic schedule to talk to us in advance of his appearance at this year's London Acoustic Show...

First of all, can you outline the history of Wilma, your faithful Lowden, for us?

I'd been to see singer-songwriter Nick Harper and I decided I needed that sound. Big. The acoustic version of a wall of Marshalls. He was using a Lowden, so I looked them up and I couldn't afford one. So I started searching through the classified ads in the back of a guitar magazine for a second-hand one. There weren't any. I didn't realise that these are handmade instruments and therefore kinda rare. I checked the previous month's issue's classifieds. Still none. Two hours later and I'd been through my whole stack of magazines until eventually I found one in a two-year-old issue. I called the number and unbelievably the guy still had it! I asked him where he lived and he was in Winchester, which is quite a long way from Leeds and I didn't have a car. Later that day my dad phoned me. I asked him what he was up to and he mentioned that he was going to Winchester the next day on business. So there you have it. Fate.

What makes her special for you as a player?

Lowdens have magical powers. George Lowden basically reinvented the way acoustic guitars are built. The bracing pattern in particular is completely different. He opened up the guitar, let it breathe and so revealed all this warm mid-range tone that had previously only been heard from classical guitars. I don't think people realise that this humble Northern Irishman is probably the most revered luthier of the last half-century. American luthier Ervin Somogyi – who wrote the textbook on modern guitar building and whose guitars are sold for six figure sums – when he met George for the first time, got down on his knees before him. He literally knelt on the ground. Wilma is particularly special for me because I've been experimenting with percussive stuff on her for 14 years, so the top is worn all over in different ways. So I have all these textures to play with. Also, she's beautiful.

Looking at your pedal board, it's more what we'd expect from a rock player – could you give us a guided tour?

Actually, electric guitarists look at my board with complete bafflement too! There are only four effects on there: Boss's OC3 Super Octave (which I totally started and now everyone's using it – I should have painted it so nobody could see what it was!), overdrive, delay and reverb. The rest of the pedals are to tweak and blend the sound of my three pickups. So there are three parametric EQ pedals and a Line Selector which is Boss's Swiss army knife A/B/Y blend/split pedal. Parametric EQ on each pickup is amazing for me. Some guitarists actually send their two or three pickups separately to the sound engineer and then expect the engineer to mix them, which is nuts to me. How is a sound engineer supposed to know

how your pickups sound and how to EQ and blend them?

How did your multi pickup system evolve?

Slowly! The one pick-up that's been constant is the Fishman Rare Earth humbucker, which is warm and fat and responds really well to effects, too. Also, because it's magnetic it only hears the strings and is completely deaf to the percussion. This is great for mixing your overall sound. For about 10 years I've been using the Rare Earth Blend which has a microphone attached, which again is just fabulous, the best internal guitar mic I've tried – and I've tried a lot. I also have one more pickup, a sensor – a stick-on transducer. There are millions of these available; I use one made by Carlos Juan called The Sly. It's super-sensitive and gorgeous.

Do you still use an acoustic amp or is it strictly PA these days?

I use a Trace Acoustic TA200, which is basically like a tiny PA, as my backline amp and onstage monitor. It's completely clean and really adjustable too. It's completely redesigned from their classic amps from 20 years ago by a British amp builder called Paul Stevens. He knows everything that anyone has ever known about amps and he's come up with inspired new ideas on top of that.

Moving on to technique now – have you always played acoustic or did you start with electric?

I started out with a three quarter size classical guitar when I was four. My teacher was a classical and flamenco guitarist, but I spent a lot of time playing songs, particularly Beatles songs from a songbook my uncle brought me back from holiday in Spain, which had Spanish guitar arrangements of

their songs. I got into electric guitar pretty soon after that and through my teens and early 20s that was my main focus. I went to The Guitar Institute for three years, studying every kind of electric guitar playing known to man. But I was starting to lean towards acoustic more and by the time I moved to Leeds to study jazz at Leeds College of Music I was really getting into contemporary acoustic stuff and experimenting with wacky techniques.

Who were your principal influences in the beginning?

I've been through so many phases as a guitarist; it's hard to find a beginning as such! One thing that really influenced me a lot was going to gigs as a kid. You can only learn so much about being a musician from listening to records, even from watching videos. Being in a room with musicians, feeling the air vibrating with the sounds they're making is so different. I used to go to gigs with my dad a lot, mostly blues gigs. So there'd be this room full of middle-aged blues fans and this one 10-year-old kid! After a while, my dad got to know all these musicians and they'd start staying over at his house after the gig to save paying for a hotel. So we'd have his house in Blackpool full of hairy American bluesmen every weekend. Walter Trout was my favourite, he was so funny, he'd show me how to play his licks, but also how to pull faces and stuff. "Hey Jaaaahn, you know when I make that face like this [screws up face and sticks out lips]? You know what I'm doing? I'm trying to fart so loudly that the audience can hear it over the music!" And Bob Brozman, he really got me into guitar drumming. Man, he was so great, just an extraordinary

guitarist. He took his own life last year and the circumstances were pretty horrific; the fact that he used to stay over at my place when I was a kid... well it's been hard for me to come to terms with.

Have you got any favourite tunings that you like to explore?

No. That would defeat the whole point of altered tunings for me. When I was a kid, I was in a band with my best friend Michael and I was already pretty good – I could play loads of scales, I could play loads of cool fast licks, pretty damn awesome. Michael could barely play, he'd taken about two lessons and couldn't play in time; he was a Neanderthal guitarist. But when it came to composing, all my guitar riffs sounded kind of generic and boring, but his sounded really original and cool. I couldn't figure it out – I had all this skill and knowledge, he didn't. Damn! Finally I realised – when I looked down at my guitar I could see all the places where my fingers were allowed to go, all the patterns and pathways. But when my friend looked at his guitar, it was just a blank page, the only tool he had, but therefore the only limit he had, was his imagination. By retuning my guitar, all those patterns disappeared and I could experience that creative freedom and compose without my fingers taking over.

Jon Gomm plays the London Acoustic Show on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September 2015 in association with Fishman and John Hornby Skewes. His new album, made up of live versions of fan favourites titled Live In The Acoustic Asylum is set for release on September 8 2015 and is available from his website.

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DANIEL HO

Sam Wise caught up with LA-based Hawaiian slack key guitarist and ukulele player Daniel Ho as he laid plans for his visit to the London Acoustic Show in association with Yamaha Music London.

LA-based Hawaiian slack key guitarist and ukulele player Daniel Ho might be the nicest man in the world – but he's also a little crazy (in a good way, you see). Nothing else can explain the extraordinary mental feats involved in learning to perform polyrhythmic pieces on the four strings of a ukulele. *Acoustic* caught up with him as he laid plans for his visit to the London Acoustic Show in association with Yamaha Music London.

You play ukulele, slack key guitar, and piano, but which one would you keep in a zombie apocalypse?

Definitely not the piano because tuners might be hard to find, and it would be too heavy to carry. If living involved a lot of travelling, and I had to walk a lot, I would choose the ukulele, but if I could stay still and farm and fish, I would choose the guitar. Compositionally, piano is my main instrument, but actually I take the ukulele everywhere I go, and the techniques translate to guitar, and you know, in a zombie apocalypse, you have to be practical, right?

How does the rich and instantly recognisable musical history of a place like Hawaii affect a musician growing up there?

I write songs about the ocean and paradise, and my feelings are closely associated to the tropical breeze, the rain, the surfing; so it definitely has a place in my sound. When I play acoustic guitar, it's 99 per cent of the time in a slack key tuning, so there's uniqueness to it, but I don't necessarily play in a traditional Hawaiian style. I think it's just my fusion of what I like; I love classical music, I love Bach, and I love acoustic sounds, so I don't do anything on the electronic side; I think my music is just a mishmash of things that are dear to me.

You've been playing for many years, and made many acclaimed albums, winning numerous Grammys, but your website is only offering your most recent one. Do you think that the age when recorded music was king is dead?

It's changing; I don't think it's passed, though if it's related to revenue, then maybe. There's always a need for change in the music, the way we deliver it, and everything else. My website is actually in redevelopment, so we do have my entire back catalogue available, it just hasn't been added to the redeveloped site yet. Major labels are doing this thing called 360, so if they sign an artist, they have their hand in absolutely everything from T-shirt sales, live performance – everything. We just do our own thing, I have my own label and money is not high on my list at all. I just want to leave a good legacy, and make music available to people who love it.

Talk us through the new album; what are some of the key themes?

Well, there's an arrangement of 'Silent Night' on Hawaiian instruments, where I play all the instruments; I have a couple of people guesting on one track, but the thing I'm proudest of is the first track, 'Na Pana Elua'. In the last few years, I have been heavily involved in world music and this piece is based on an Indian polyrhythm that a tabla player taught me; 10.5 quarter notes is one of the rhythms, and seven eighth notes is the other. I wrote the melody in one, the seven dotted quarters, and I played both at the same time on the ukulele. Then I used an ipu heke, which is a traditional Hawaiian percussion instrument made from a gourd, which I used for the kick and snare-type rock rhythms, and the harmonies are pretty jazz styled; lots of extended chords and dissonances. I also used an udu, which is an African instrument, and played a partido alto rhythm on the agogo bells, which is normally in 4/4, and put it in 10.5.

I also used an acoustic bass from Ohana, so the core of the piece is on that and ukulele, but we have shakers and triangles and all sorts of other percussion giving Latin elements to the song. It's really a world music piece in that it fuses all these things together. It took me many months to work out how to play that rhythm and all those parts together. It's probably the most special piece to me, and it represents this direction that I'm taking of learning about other cultures and putting them together with my own. It's kind of addictive because we get so used to playing in 4/4, 3/4, 6/8, and rhythm just doesn't get examined as much as it could be, but in African and Indian music you have this rhythmic complexity. The best way to learn it is to try to compose in it, walk around tapping it out; I found you can even march in seven dotted quarter time! I don't mind if a drummer is playing it, but I cannot stand an electronic sample playing four beats exactly the same every time; it's far too redundant for me to hear that same hi-hat sample every time. If a drummer were doing it, then at least the hi-hat doesn't open exactly the same way every time.

How does it feel for someone who grew up in the heart of ukulele country to see it spreading all over the world like it is now?

I think it's wonderful. I love to see 'Dancing Queen' being played by a uke group in Australia; to me, it's an instrument, and I love to see even the designs evolve into real high end ukuleles being built by classical guitar luthiers, with Spanish heels and fancy adornments, or waterproof ukuleles being made available at the low end. One of my songs, 'Pineapple Mango', which is a three-chord song, I put together a video of players from all over the world playing it; it's called 'Pineapple Mango Around The World'. I did it to show all the different clubs, and share them and their work with everyone else.

What do British uke players need to know?

Nothing! I think there's a lot of incredible British ukulele players like George Formby, and the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. It would be an exchange more than anything, and there's a lot we can learn from them as well.

Slack key guitar is not much known on these shores – can you tell us a bit about it?

It's a traditional Hawaiian style of playing; generally open tunings, like a G chord, which we call Taro Patch. It isn't really a tuning alone, but it's typical Hawaiian phrases in that tuning. I use a tuning called G Kilauea. Essentially, it's the bottom three strings tuned down a whole step, changing the tonal centre to G, and approaching the guitar like an orchestra. I think of it as a bass section, a harmony section, and melody. You end up with DGCGBE, and making those Gs there means that the I, IV and V chords are all there as open strings, which is sort of a goal of slack key guitar, to make it smooth and sweet. That's pretty much the tuning I've been using for 19 years. I didn't know that I could find something that could function that well, but a lot of it came from that compositional background, and taking that compositional approach for functional reasons. If you take standard tuning, you have the I, IV and V chords available in the key of A, but then the G string is there and you always have to finger it. Then you also have this E, which would fit nicely, but you're always using it to play melody. So, this tuning is better in those ways; I even wrote a book about it, and in the 19 years since I haven't found anything better. Also, of course, having your own tuning means that people can't easily find the voicings you're playing. I do also play standard tuning if I'm strumming, because G Kilauea is better for picking.

Talk us through the instruments you use...

My ukulele is a Ko'alohe, made in Hawaii. I've been endorsing them for 20 years. It's a custom spruce top, Brazilian rosewood back and sides, and it's a fine instrument for live music. I am most interested in tonewoods, and my background is in classical guitar, so I like cedar tops. I also like spruce tops, but to me, cedar is a little warmer, and also it's softer, so maybe the luthiers can't go as thin. The spruce cuts through really nicely, but it doesn't have the visual appeal of koa. You really need rosewood for the back and sides, not ply or anything like that; low end ukuleles always use ply, and instruments coming from China will always have been built heavier to cope with humidity and with the shipping

– and so they don't fall apart. Pepe Romero Jr is another guy who makes really nice classical style French polished ukuleles – really thin, light woods. Jack Johnson uses his guitars and ukes – as did Paco de Lucia. For guitar, I am playing the new silent guitar by Yamaha. There have been several generations now, and this is the prototype of the third generation; it uses acoustic modelling to create the acoustic tone around the bodiless instrument. For me, it's better than any acoustic instrument I've played because it gives me that acoustic sound, but with zero feedback. The previous generations didn't really get the acoustic sound right, but since they designed this acoustic modelling, it does put all of that harmonic complexity in around the piezo tone. I just played it at a big folk festival in Australia, and I was complimented by the sound people for both the ease of getting it sounding good, but also the tone. My preamp is a Bose T1, which I absolutely love, parametric EQ and all that, and great mic modelling, so I can get really close to

the sound I get in the studio live, and carry it around in a little box.

What are your future plans, recording and performing wise?

My next record is a ukulele classical guitar duet recording with Pepe Romero Sr. We've done a couple of songs, and I'm putting together all the music and arrangements for that. I recently won producer of the year at the Golden Melody Awards in Asia, and I do a lot of world music stuff out there. I'm kind of sticking with the world music and classical things, and trying to learn and grow and develop as a musician as much as I can. I'll also be coming to the London Acoustic Show in September to do a slack key guitar workshop as well as a ukulele workshop.

Daniel appears at the London Acoustic Show on September 12 and 13 2015 in association with Yamaha Music London.
www.danielho.com





ANTOINE DUFOUR

Alison Richter chats to the fingerstyle virtuoso ahead of a masterclass and main stage performance at the London Acoustic Show in association with Ernie Ball Strings.

When Canadian virtuoso Antoine Dufour performs at the London Acoustic Show, attendees can expect one man and one guitar. Dufour will arrive with his Beauregard guitar, and that's it — no backup. 'I try to travel light,' he says. 'I have good cases and I just bring one guitar.' Apparently, one is all it takes for the fingerstyle soloist to simulate the sound of an entire band, with intricate melodies, percussive techniques, and chord structures.

Dufour's concerts focus less on improvisation and more on dynamics and interpretation, an approach that he says keeps the songs recognisable and interesting for both himself and the audience. 'There are two things I think of when I do a set list,' he says. 'The biggest problem is I have to change tunings for pretty much every song and that's a lot of work, so I try to organise my set list with the tunings that are closest together, and I try to group similar tunes. I start strong with something simpler and end with the harder ones.'

World renown through six albums and six years of touring, Dufour is a songwriter as well as a guitarist. 'I listen to a lot of different music and I emulate what I like,' he says, 'but I make it sound like my own way of writing. I create songs in a style that's inspired by something I like, and then write on top of the key as I try to learn it. That's kind of my writing technique now. When I started, it was mostly trial and error by feel. I was trying to write, but I didn't really know how. It was always luck — or bad luck! But with the albums, I narrowed down my writing, and by writing chords and the melody on paper, I can study the song slowly and arrange it. It's a lot of work, but it helped

my technique get better by being able to play what I've written. The touring helped me get comfortable onstage and playing solo. The only thing that still brings me nerves are the new songs on the set list that I've never done — but it's getting better!'

Dufour grew up surrounded by music. His parents owned guitars, and early on he discovered his father's album collection. He became enamoured of progressive rock bands like Genesis, Gentle Giant, and Yes, and developed a love for classical guitar because of Steve Howe. He began studying the genre as a college student at age 17, and through his teacher was introduced to fingerstyle players such as Leo Kottke, Pierre Bensusan, and his biggest inspiration, Don Ross.

Now 35 and solely an acoustic player, Dufour also played electric guitar while in his 20s. 'I played heavy metal shred stuff like that 10 years ago,' he says. 'I played a lot more electric, but in the last five years I haven't had much time for it, so I'm rusty. I don't have much time to practise. I've got an Ernie Ball Music Man Majesty that I got from them because I'm sponsored for strings; it's a John Petrucci signature guitar, which I like a lot. I'm more into alternative and electronic music now. I love Imogen Heap, Radiohead, Björk and Coldplay.'

Although he placed first in Canadian fingerstyle guitar championships and third internationally (behind Doug Smith and Don Alder), Dufour says that mastering fingerstyle 'is still really hard,' and remains not only modest but seemingly incredulous about the accolades. 'I'm trying my best, but I should practise more and get better at certain things,' he says. 'Classical guitar helped me a lot with the basics, the playing technique. I learned

fingerstyle primarily by learning a lot of Don Ross. I got better and eventually started writing. I don't consider myself such a great guitarist, actually. I can be okay sometimes, but I can't play really fast or shred so much. Some guitar players are good at that. I just have my own thing and I try to work on that.'

He bought his first acoustic, a Takamine, in 2000, and two years later began playing Larrivée guitars. He received a Stonebridge when he won the Canadian Guitar Festival's Fingerstyle Guitar Championship in 2006, then discovered Montreal's Beauregard Guitars.

'I was going to guitar shows, trying a lot of guitars, and realising a lot of things about the different woods,' he says. 'I found the Beauregard, and nothing comes close. I just love Mario Beauregard's work. His guitars have a very full, powerful sound. My OM has such great sustain that I can't find anywhere else.'

Dufour uses Archangel preamps and DiMarzio pickups, combining transducer and magnetic pickups, and a mic inside the guitar. 'Sometimes it's a little harder to amplify live because the guitars are so responsive,' he says. He just added a second Beauregard, the larger, AD signature model, to his collection, opting for spruce this time instead of cedar, with a bevel and different headstock. 'I wanted something a little different than my OM,' he says.

Dufour records for CandyRat Records and now tracks in his own studio, where he also mixes and masters. 'I like doing sound and mixing,' he says. 'I have my own way of recording acoustic guitar and mixing it, my personal thing, so that's something I always try to develop. I like the big capsule mics more than the smaller ones, because acoustic music has a lot of dynamics, so I use larger diaphragm



mics and they sound fuller. I put one mic at the 12th fret pointing at the seventh fret, and another one on my right, pointing 45 degrees just above the bridge where my hand is playing. So that makes it very wide left and right. I like the characteristic of a clear sound, very precise on the left, and a full sound on the right, and I combine them when I mix. It captures a lot of the whole tone of the instrument.'

He also produces other artists, including fingerstyle guitarists Donovan Raitt and Daniel Voth. 'It inspires me when I hear what they're doing,' he says. 'It pushes me. I'm discovering new artists doing the style their own way, trying something else, new things.'

In addition to seminars, workshops, and masterclasses Dufour is a guitar teacher, holding lessons via Skype and in a first-of-its-kind fingerstyle programme that he launched at a college in Quebec (Cégep Marie-Victorin). He teaches half a dozen students individually, all on one day per week, and is looking forward to a lab in the coming school year, during which he'll teach a group together, in addition to separate lessons. 'It's going to be a little different,' he says. 'The programme

was offered only as a secondary instrument last year, but now it's a main instrument. The students want to know how they can do these little tricks here and there, and I can probably teach the basics a little bit, even if it's an extended technique. Of course I give a lot of exercises first, but sometimes I still show them a little trick, and they practise that and they're happy. At the same time, I tell them to get strong technique first, and songs that are accessible to their level.'

His current schedule, which includes tour dates, has made him the busiest he's ever been – teaching, performing, producing, travelling, and working on new material. 'I have six or seven songs that are done, but I need to work on them,' he says. 'Probably next year I'll finish all the writing and recording and get another album out.'

Social media has played a strong role in bringing Antoine Dufour to the forefront. His YouTube videos have amassed more than 50 million views – an astounding number for any artist; even more so for an independent solo acoustic guitarist. Looking at his many accomplishments and his loyal international

fan base seems to overwhelm him. Asked if he can truly see the scope of what he's done, he replies, 'I don't know. It's pretty awesome. When you write your first tunes and you're putting them out, it's cool to have an album. Then you see people playing your tunes and learning them, and you never thought it would happen. It's wonderful to inspire other people. I've been lucky enough to always be motivated. I'm not searching for anything. I'm just doing it and I hope for the best. I think that's why I do a lot of different things, like touring, recording, and teaching. I can always have different things so I can make a living at the end of the day, because it's not easy now. The music business is really low, and it's tough to tour and sell music. It's hard, so you better have a lot of arrows in your bow, as they say. I try to do a lot of things that are all related to music, but that are diverse, so that I can stay working. I just focus on what I do. I'm trying to write music that I like, and hopefully people will like it – that's all.'

Antoine Dufour plays the London Acoustic Show in association with Ernie Ball Strings on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September 2015.

www.antoinedufourmusic.com



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LUCA STRICAGNOLI

Luca Stricagnoli is an exciting talent emerging from Italy with the help of CandyRat Records and some insanely technical fingerstyle guitar wizardry. Sam Wise finds out about that Guns N' Roses arrangement...

If you've come across percussive guitar virtuoso Luca Stricagnoli, chances are he was playing AC/DC's 'Thunderstruck' on YouTube, and in an age where we're approaching peak Thunderstruck, you might have overlooked him. That would be a shame because the young Italian is a truly innovative player, stretching the boundaries of technique, and lending a fine musical ear to proceedings too. *Acoustic* caught up with him prior to the launch of his latest video, an extraordinary take on the Guns N' Roses classic 'Sweet Child O' Mine' performed on two guitars at once. More on that later...

Tell us a bit about the solo acoustic guitar scene on your home turf of Italy...

There are many skilled guitar players in Italy; I've got many friends who are really good, but not many of them are very famous, and when it comes to the situation at festivals, I see pretty much the same names every time, even though there are people who are more skilled, but they are the most famous ones. Everyone who plays acoustic guitar here in Italy knows Stefano Barone, and people like him opened my mind up to this kind of guitar playing, but when it comes to Italy, we pretty much hear all of the percussive fingerstyle music from the USA.

I believe you were classically trained when you were young, but gave it up to focus on judo. Can you tell us about that?

Well, my relationship with guitar is a little bit strange. When I was young, I asked my mum to let me play because I saw someone playing and thought it was cool – in Italy, classical guitar is at the forefront of the instrument. I started playing at 10, but at 16 I didn't want to play guitar any

more. You know, there's that difficult phase when all the guys are getting into cool stuff, and it felt like nobody cared about my guitar playing, and I felt like I had no concrete possibility to make money from playing guitar. I think I was even a little bit angry with guitar; you know, I put all my force into this instrument, and I felt like it wasn't giving back to me, so I felt like I wanted to take up a fighting sport. I spent about three years not even putting a finger on the guitar, but when I was 19 years old, a friend who used to practise judo with me knew that I played guitar and he showed me videos of more percussive guitar styles. I thought "wow!", and suddenly I was in love with guitar again. I used YouTube, and tried to learn the song that he showed me, and suddenly everyone was saying to me, "Luca, you should come back to playing guitar". I had two posters in my room, one was a famous judo player, and the other was a famous acoustic guitar player, and I used to wake up and look at the two pictures, trying to decide which I wanted to do. The picture of the acoustic guitar player was always smiling, with this really happy expression, whereas the judo player was ready to fight, with a very serious expression. I knew which of those I wanted more.

So, coming back to guitar, how did you come to develop your amazing style and technique?

Well, the first tune that I learned was the same as every young guitar player: 'Drifting' by Andy McKee. That was the video that my friend showed to me, and I learned that song, and taught myself other songs with Andy McKee, and Erik Mongrain, and thought, "That's how this is done". YouTube is a great gift for younger guitar players. I started doing my arrangements for about a year and a half, and then I started

trying to do some new things because I get bored with guitar in five minutes. I was thinking, "This has been done by this guitar player, this has been done by that one", and I really don't want to just do what everyone else is doing. So I developed my own style within that genre.

You play some very impressive covers; and your album seems to have some of your own music on it. I notice that YouTube only has covers; do you find they are an effective way to reach your audience, or is there more to it than that?

This thing about arrangements is an important matter for me, because every time, even when I want to play arrangements around something, I feel like they're considered an easy option, something which is not as difficult as composing a new piece. I first started bringing something of myself to the guitar with the theme to *Last Of The Mohicans*; I did many arrangements before I started to compose, and there's a reason for that. At first, everything was just fun. I heard this theme that Plácido Domingo used, and I knew I wanted to play that on guitar – but my guitar was a seven-string, so I wasn't going to be able to find any cover that I could copy. So, at first, it was just for fun, but then I realised that I needed to work really hard at this. I gave my first videos to CandyRat Records, and I saw that the *Last Of The Mohicans* went well because it had something different. So now, I'm mostly doing famous songs, not because people know it, but because there are lots of versions out there on solo guitar, and I want to create a different version. So, I want to create new music, new notes, but when you are making an arrangement, you don't have to take any responsibility for the music, you can just concentrate on guitar, and



Image copyright: Mikhail Sergeev

sometimes, the way the record sounds doesn't lend itself to the guitar, so you need to find something new to make it work, and that's exciting to me.

You use some very unusual techniques. Is being an innovator important to you?

Well, the thing with the violin bow is one of my favourites because that was the first thing that gave me some kind of visibility. Of course, when you're in your own room, you can do anything you want, you can use three guitars, and keep changing them, but when you play live, you have to somehow rearrange everything on stage to make that happen. So every time I play, I have to have three guitars with me. Another interesting one to me was the arrangement of 'Braveheart', where I used lots of instruments, a recorder, two harmonicas, three guitars, and so I started to think about a new guitar, which is supposed to be a substitute for the flute. So I have a guitar that is played just with the right hand, while I play another guitar with the left hand. I developed a whole new arrangement to show this guitar. I feel that this way of playing with two guitars is going to be something really different. It has two sets of strings, with the

second on the side like a harp. I kept the top bout free for percussion, and I have a plate on there for percussive taps.

At this point in the interview, Luca treated us to a preview of his extraordinary Sweet Child O' Mine arrangement; he plays the famous riff on the harp strings, taps different parts of the arrangement on both this harp guitar, laid flat in front of him, and his more standard guitar around his neck, and even adds a notched capo to change tuning mid stream. Even those of us who pay attention to solo guitar will find this a technical and innovative tour de force. Check the video out on YouTube.

Do you ever feel trapped in the solo guitar world, or do you get to play your music to mainstream audiences?

I'd like to do that because what I like about acoustic guitar, compared to other styles, is that normal audiences can listen to it as well. There's a huge block between classical guitar and mainstream audiences, but at least with this, there is some crossover because of the arrangements. I don't know what's going to happen, and how my playing will change; maybe

I'll wake up one day and decide that I want to start singing, and start a band, but still with acoustic guitar at the forefront...

Tell us about the different guitars you play and tour with.

All of my guitars are made by luthier Davide Serracini. Getting to know this luthier was a really big part of my development as a player and I have to say that lots of things I do are thanks to him because he is a very skilled guy and creates things for me that didn't exist before. I met him at a festival when I was 19 years old and he heard me play and so I asked him to let me play his guitars on the stage. He was impressed, and he helped me a lot and gave me an endorsement. I love these guitars, everyone who sees them does, but quite apart from how beautiful they are, they have a particular feeling for me; I can't ever imagine using anyone else's guitars. Although I think he's a little bit ashamed of the Frankenstein guitar that I'm using on 'Sweet Child O' Mine' though...

Luca Stricagnoli plays the London Acoustic Show on September 12 and 13 2015.

www.candyrat.com/artists/lucastricagnoli





STEVE 'N' SEAGULLS

With over 12 million YouTube views for their take on AC/DC's 'Thunderstruck', Steve 'N' Seagulls head to the UK for the London Acoustic Show – **Sam Wise** chats to the band about their debut album *Farm Machine*...

The first time I came across a Steve 'N' Seagulls video, I initially thought I was watching Hayseed Dixie before realising there were some subtle differences. Hailing from Finland, more famous for metal bands like Nightwish, and for the reticence and quietness of its residents, Steve 'N' Seagulls seem like a band unlikely to even exist, never mind rise to prominence. Nevertheless, the chances are that you, too, have seen their hillbilly take on AC/DC's 'Thunderstruck'; the video, which opens with the arrival of the accordion player on a ride-on lawnmower, could almost be on a farm in Alabama, USA,

but perhaps the continental chromatic system accordion is a clue that all is not as it seems. We caught up with vocalist Pukki as he prepared to go on stage at a festival in Finland, while recovering from another gig the night before in Lithuania.

How does a Finnish band end up making American hillbilly covers of American rock tunes?

Well, that's the question I guess. We just started off with cover versions of pop songs from around the world, and started the whole metal/rock thing about two years ago. The thing with the first video was to get some

commercial breakthrough with this line-up. It's been a nice change for us, the whole acoustic thing; we had all been making a living out of making music, but electric music, so it's really fun to do something different.

Where Hayseed Dixie have a bluegrass background, most of your musicians play as though they have a background in metal. Is that right?

Yes, you're right about that. We don't really have a bluegrass background. I mean, there is an actual bluegrass scene in Finland, not with many bands, but they're out there. We're playing songs



that we grew up listening to, which were on our parent's record shelves, mangled, but mangled with respect to the originals. Truth be told, we have been checking out a lot of bluegrass bands, but you know, while we can't play like them, we don't sound much like traditional Finnish bands either. We checked out Hayseed Dixie, and their banjo player is incredible; we could never compete with that, so we're trying our own thing. We were all studying in the town of Jyväskylä in central Finland, some of us in the same school, and at least four of us had been playing together before Steve 'N' Seagulls, and we already knew some members from different bands. We had all grown up listening to classic rock and metal, and also we'd listened to a bit of bluegrass. Our banjo player wasn't really a banjo player; he had been a guitarist, which I think shows in the way he plays. He understands the tuning, but he picks it like a guitar player, not playing all the traditional banjo rolls, which gives us a bit of a different sound from someone like Hayseed Dixie. Anyway, we had this idea to play bluegrass version of pop songs, rock songs, and it was, for a long time, a side project, but the world of the internet is a strange one, and our version of 'Thunderstruck' went viral, and suddenly we're playing everywhere!

Your Wikipedia page gives what appear to be fake names for you. Can you tell us about the origin of those?

The band name was our banjo player's girlfriend's idea; they were driving by the lake, and saw some seagulls, and it just seemed to fit. As for our names, those are just the result of constant jabbering in the van for thousands of kilometres; the things we discuss aren't exactly intellectual. Finns are not famous for small talk, but in a van, there's no room to be silent, so there's a lot of nonsense, flatulence and silliness, and we gave each other nicknames.

Your accordion player plays a continental chromatic system, which are rarely seen here. How did you find him, or is that the normal accordion in Finland? (This is a button accordion with row after row of black and white buttons; it looks like a melodeon on steroids...)

Well, in Finland we have both; piano and chromatic, but he's been playing that since he was around four years old. I don't think he's ever played the piano accordion, but it's pretty common in Finland. He's been playing traditional Finnish dance music since he was

a teenager, and it's relevant for that I guess. Dance music is very separate from traditional folk music in Finland, and he was only doing the dance music stuff, but I think anything other than the chromatic would be very strange for him. So, I guess we have to look strange to the world instead!

If Steve 'N' Seagulls change the world, what would it be like when you're done?

I guess it would be something like, er, people not taking themselves or each other too seriously. We really don't take each other seriously – or life, really. What we do is a lot of fun, but I guess that's usually how music careers should be; it's not dead serious, nobody is irreplaceable. You should have fun making your music, otherwise how can you expect anyone to enjoy it? This was never supposed to go big; it was supposed to be a side project, but we don't mind, we take anything that's on offer right now and see how it goes.

After an album of cover versions, what will you do next?

Well, to be honest, I don't know yet. We should probably start thinking about the next album; there is definitely going to be one, and it will be mostly covers, and probably some originals as well. We don't have any of our songs finished at the moment; we will just do what we always do, just get together and let our ideas collide, which is how we got our sound in the first place. I think it'll be a collaborative process. We don't really do the thing where you show up at a rehearsal with a song, and tell everyone what to play.

How hard is it to play those traditional type instruments on such a large concert stage? Do you have amplification issues?

The main challenge with an instrument that sounds beautiful when it's heard acoustically is that you then have to buy loads of equipment, and technology, and try and try again to get something that sounds at least okay. In a lot of places, the volume is just too loud to use a microphone for the instruments, but a lot of the pickup systems aren't great. For example, anyone who can make a decent contact pickup for double bass and cello will be a rich man! Even playing in tune can be hard when the volume is high, though the in-ear monitors really help. Actually, as an acoustic band who play mostly at venues and festivals who are used to electric musicians, we used to have constant amplification problems all round, but that was before we had our own technician

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who is the sixth guy travelling with us now. He's done a lot of work making it sound right, and now we consider him a part of the band.

Given that there is not an established circuit in Finland for bluegrass versions of rock songs, you guys are playing all sorts of venues. What makes a good show for Steve 'N' Seagulls?

This might sound a cliché, but first of all it's the audience. The second is how it sounds to us; if we can't hear ourselves properly, it's really hard to make it a good gig. Considering we're in Finland, and play outside a lot, the weather can make or destroy a gig. We've done all sorts of things; weddings, small private occasions,

nightclubs, big festival venues. This is such a small country, with so few people that you have to be able to play in all sorts of places – we can't afford to be too selective!

What are your tour plans for the rest of 2015?

Well, right now we just came back from Lithuania, with no sleep at all, and now we're in Finland at a smaller festival. We have a few other festivals here, and then we're off to the Wacken festival in Germany, which is one of the biggest metal festivals in the world. Metal audiences react surprisingly well; we went to a metal festival in Finland a couple of weeks ago, and when we got out of the van, the first

thing that greeted us was a death metal band sound checking, growling and shouting, which honestly made us a bit nervous. The fans, though, they like the songs we do; actually, metal fans were the first to take notice of us, and then bluegrass fans, before it ever started to go viral. I mean, you can't really predict how a band is going to go anymore, but it went well this year, and let's just hope that there's at least one year more. The best thing you can do is to come see us live, buy our album, and enjoy the show!

Steve 'N' Seagulls play the London Acoustic Show on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September 2015.
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DOYLE DYKES

Doyle Dykes is considered by many to be one of the world's greatest fingerstyle guitarists. He's shared the stage with Chet Atkins, Duane Eddy, Vince Gill, and Larry Carlton among others – and this September, Doyle makes a pit stop at the London Acoustic Show. Alison Richter finds out what to expect...

Quite often during interviews, there's an instant when the subject says something – a revelation, an “a-ha” statement, a reminiscence – that brings everything to a split-second halt. With Doyle Dykes, an undisputed master of the guitar, it happens while he's casually discussing technique. ‘I never felt that I had the facility that a lot of guys have in some ways,’ he says. Now let that sink in for a moment.

Dykes is bringing his facility to the London Acoustic Show, where he will perform and hold a masterclass. He's no stranger to the magazine, having written a column for the publication early on. ‘I do love the acoustic guitar, and I love what the UK is doing to promote it,’ he says. ‘There are some fine young fingerstyle guitar players in England. Sometimes it seems that in England, music is still in the forefront, more than in the States, and I admire that greatly. I wish we had more of that love and passion for music and live music.’

With years of concerts and clinics to his credit, he has a keen sense of what the audience wants to hear and know, and he looks forward to the Q&A sessions. ‘I always like interacting with the audience, and I encourage them to ask questions because it's about them more than it's about me,’ he says. ‘Having done this for so long, I kind of know what they're looking for. But there are a few things that I like to discuss about how I approach a song and how I use the guitar as a voice – because I'm not a great singer! I can sing, I like to do that, but when I have a guitar in my hands, I feel something very different and very special. I think it's part of the gift,

and I give credit to God for that. But there are certain ways that I approach a song that I feel lends itself more to getting the attention of people and keeping the melody upfront, rather than just playing. I'd rather focus on the song.’

In addition to performances, Dykes has new projects in the works. Firstly, fans can download the Periscope app to enjoy behind-the-scenes live footage. Secondly, there's a free online guitar-lesson series, soon to debut. Thirdly, he is recording, as well as re-recording some previous material, for a late 2015/early 2016 release. It's quite an undertaking, as he revisits early tracks, unreleased recordings, personal recordings, cover songs, and hymns.

He reached a milestone in June: the anniversary of his 50th year as a guitarist. Growing up in Jacksonville, Florida, church was the fulcrum of his life; at 11, he had what he describes as “a personal experience with God,” a pivotal moment that reshaped his destiny. A short time later, he gravitated toward the guitar – after futile efforts by his parents to encourage him to pursue an instrument. His faith has never wavered, and it remains an integral element of his music. His repertoire, wherever he performs, includes hymns alongside classic country songs, Beatles hits, and U2 medleys. ‘I don't want to alienate myself from any place or anybody,’ he says. ‘I think people know that spiritual side of me, and I've never been able to separate it, so to me, that's where it all comes from. I've said this at the Grand Ole Opry, at churches, and at the Cavern Club: I think it's a gift from God. You tap into that source and it's a wellspring. In Proverbs, it

says, “When the desire comes, it is a tree of life.” A tree of life of course bears fruit, and I've been living off of that for a long time, I guess, but it was as desire that came through that direction in my life. So 50 years of actually being a born-again Christian and 50 years playing the guitar – that's just all comes together for me.’

He'll arrive in London with at least two guitars: his Olson and Kirk Sand six-string models – and possibly an Ovation 12-string. If his new Olson arrives in time, it too will also accompany him. He had signature models with Guild/Fender, but those models ‘all went away in one day,’ he says, when Fender closed the Ovation factory, where Guild guitars were also made. ‘I was recording a song called ‘New Hartford,’ where the factory was [in Connecticut], in honor of the guys who built my guitars, on the very day they closed,’ he says. ‘Ovation guitars were ahead of their time. The Ovation was the only guitar that you could plug in and be heard and it still sounded more acoustic. It was such an innovation. People still love Ovation, so when they asked if I would play some of their guitars, I told them I would help them out in hopes of at least getting the custom shop going and hiring some of those guys back. That's exactly what they've done, and I'm very happy about it. Ovation was my first endorsement back in the 1980s, so I may carry one of those [to London] if I can.’

Several years ago, while he was a Taylor Guitars artist, Dykes attended a guitar show where Kirk Sand introduced him to James Olson, who expressed interest in someday building him a guitar. Through a unique set of circumstances – a fundraising event





to help a pastor friend in Texas, playing an Olson that belonged to the gentleman in whose home the fundraiser was held, their mutual friendship with Olson player Phil Keaggy, a call to Keaggy and playing one of his Olsons – Dykes made the call to purchase a guitar, traveled to Minnesota, tried three models that had been built on spec, bought one, and brought it home. He was awaiting a second guitar, a cutaway, at the time of our interview, in hopes of bringing it to London as well. ‘Jim’s [James Olson] guitars are very expensive, but they’re incredible,’ he says. ‘They fill up a room when you play them. It’s amazing the sound you get. I am so honored

to have a James Olson guitar. I can’t tell you how happy I am.’

‘One reason that Jim’s guitars are so consistent is that there are no voids on the neck. The neck, in a lot of ways, is the most important component. A lot of people think that it’s the wood, that it’s the top, but it all works together. If the neck’s not right, it’s not going to sound the same, and a lot of builders miss that. Jim reinforces his necks to the point where it’s like an old L5. With the stripes and different tone woods mixed in, it makes that neck so rigid. The energy comes through that, and of course the top picks it up. An acoustic guitar is a speaker.

Lloyd Baggs [LR Baggs pickups] explained that to me years ago. He said, “Your signal comes down through the neck, and where the signal hits on the bridge is the diaphragm. The top is like the speaker cone, the body is like the speaker cabinet, and that’s where the energy comes down that diaphragm.” It’s amazing. I never thought about it that way before. The way that energy comes through it has a lot to do with bracing, but on an Olson, a lot of it is the neck.’

Prior to becoming a soloist, Dykes toured the world with gospel legends the Stamps Quartet (who were also backing vocalists for Elvis Presley), and Grand Ole Opry star

Grandpa Jones. He shared stages with a remarkable variety of guitarists, including Vince Gill, John Fogerty, Tommy Emmanuel, Les Paul, and Chet Atkins, whom he often references with great love and admiration as a teacher, colleague, friend, and mentor.

'I've never been a big showboat kind of player,' he says, 'but I love to hear somebody sit down and play everything they know. I think it's great. It tells me everything they've been into, what they've worked hard to do, where they are, and where they're coming from. The difference is in how they affect an audience and what makes their sound. If you're going to make a living out of this, you have to be able to move and touch people, no matter what genre. It's important that we relate to people, but when you do all these calisthenics on guitar... as my daughter said about someone when they were all over a song, it was amazing what they could do with their voice – and she's very careful not to ever put anyone down – but she said, "Just because you can doesn't always mean you should," because it ruined the song. That's what I got early on from players like Chet Atkins and Les Paul. Les was a lot more flamboyant, but when you heard his records he was still so on the melody. I heard Chet say, "I'm a sucker for a melody," and "The melody always comes first." I learned that from him through his playing way before I ever heard him say it. Merle Travis also – you always heard the song. It's fun when you improvise and go in a different direction. That's where the licks and the tricks and all those little things come in. I don't always play a song like it was written, but the melody always comes first.'

Dykes remains close friends with Taylor Guitars co-founder Bob Taylor and credits the company with taking his career to a new level. 'I don't think I'll ever be as high-profile with anybody as I was with Taylor,' he says. During those years, he was easily the highlight of winter NAMM shows. His annual performances in the company's showroom were packed beyond capacity, with crowds gathering hours ahead and standing wall-to-wall inside when he took the stage.

As a former pastor and man of deep faith, Dykes is open about his beliefs, but his ministry goes far beyond spoken words, as his music connects with listeners on an emotional and often spiritual level, something that also surprises him.

'Most of the time I don't get it. I really don't,' he says. 'I know what I can do on guitar, but sometimes I have to build my faith up and build myself up. There are Scriptures that I use for it, Philippians 4:13 is one of them ["I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"], and I say that to myself over and over before I get up to play, but when I see the reaction and I feel something that goes way beyond me, then I know there's something behind that. But a lot of times when I was at the Taylor booth and it would fill up, I'd think, "Why are they here?" It would make me nervous. Grandpa Jones used to say, "It'll be all right after the first song." It's true. You fall into it and find yourself. I've always known in my heart of hearts that when people say they like you and they like your music, it's never about me. When I would do that Taylor stuff, or Sweetwater, or Guild – I love those guys; I made a lot of friends in that world, but I never thought it was about me. It was about whoever I was representing.'

'I always say a prayer; I'll say, "God, help me to represent Acoustic magazine in a great way, in a proper way, let me represent you in a great way, and bless what I do and myself. Let me play well, help me to perform well, but go beyond what I can do and do something that no one expects." It adds such excitement when you know you can play your music, and when you have a new arrangement of a song. That's a fun thing, but when you see things happen that go way beyond yourself... I'm not saying that it happens every single time, but if I didn't think it happened in a special way every time, then I would stay home. You've got to be able to touch lives and impact people and have something special, or what's it for? Music is here for a reason. It's like my friend [award-winning trumpet player/singer/composer/producer] Phil Driscoll said: "In that moment, at that time, when those people are there, I expect something to happen that will impact them and make a difference." Whether it's the excitement about continuing to play, or learning to play, or maybe they're going through something in their life and I don't have to say anything, but they're touched somehow and it gives them hope. There's always something that's greater than the music.'

Doyle Dykes will appear at the London Acoustic Show on September 12 & 13 2015.
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ALBERT LEE

*For decades, Albert Lee has added his chicken pickin' licks to the music of Emmylou Harris, Eric Clapton and the Everly Brothers, and now he has brought out a stripped down acoustic album **Highwayman** – **Julian Piper** chats to him ahead of his London Acoustic Show performance...*

It's February 1976 and Elvis Presley is getting ready to hit the road; the mammoth swing through America will last all year and be his last roll of the dice. But he needs the best band around, and to call guitarist James Burton, who's been playing with him off and on since 1969, is a logical step. At the time, Burton was playing with Emmylou Harris in her Hot Band, but his career started with teenage heartthrob Ricky Nelson. His biting guitar licks on Nelson's pop songs, and work as a session player with just about everyone from the Monkees to Merle Haggard gained him a reputation as one of country music's foremost pickers. A hard act to follow, but almost 40 years later, Albert Lee recalls how he got to fill the shoes of one of the hottest players on the planet.

'I'd been to see Emmylou a couple of times, and backstage I was talking with the band when they said, "Hey, Albert, what are you doing in the next couple of weeks?" James [Burton] was going to play with Elvis, and they asked me to fill in with the Hot Band. James ended up staying with Elvis – there was now way he could do both gigs, and so I slotted into Emmylou's band. At first, a few people said, "Who's this English guy?" but I won people over and was knocked out to be there; I was playing the type of music I loved and playing in this fantastic band!

I learnt a lot from playing with Emmylou because she had a great knack for picking great songs; it's always been one of her fortes that she's got a great ear for a tune,' Albert says.

Albert left the band after a couple of years to tour behind a solo album, but he can't have any regrets. Few guitarists can match his staggering

career, one that includes working alongside Eric Clapton, the Everly Brothers, the Crickets, and just about every country player of note to have ever blown out of Nashville. For five decades, his ability to hang back, be one of the band, and only delivering his sparkling solos when needed, has marked him out as a sideman par excellence. Speaking from his Malibu Canyon home in Los Angeles, Albert sounds understandably pretty satisfied with the way things have turned out.

'I can see the fog hanging around in the mountains, which means we're getting a nice cool breeze. We've been here for 40 years and love it, but the drought is scary. We worry about fires, but the good things outweigh the bad.'

Albert's story is nothing short of incredible. Born in 1943, inevitably Albert's early heroes were the wild men of rock n' roll such as Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard, with Buddy Holly close behind. When he was 16 years old, Albert packed in school and began playing professionally.

'Hearing Lonnie Donegan got me into playing guitar; I would have loved a Martin like his, but they just weren't around. In fact, I played for about 18 months without actually owning a guitar – I just used to borrow them from school friends,' he laughs. 'Then in 1958, my mother bought me a Hofner President archtop, with a pickup attached to the end of the fingerboard; that was my first decent guitar that I could actually play, everything before that was pretty grim! I got good at copying the solos I heard on rock n' roll records, and in 1959 I traded the Hofner for what I thought was the same guitar Buddy Holly played – but of course it wasn't as it was a Grazioso made

in Czechoslovakia. It was a solid guitar with three pickups and, at £85 second hand, it was expensive for the time. A few pounds more and maybe a year later, I could have bought a Fender Telecaster. Guitarists now don't realise how lucky they are; you can walk into a shop and they all sound great, but back then there was a lot of garbage around. It wasn't until later in 1960 that the American stuff started to come over; you just couldn't get any American guitars, unless it was second hand or someone had sold it to a music shop, because they were classed as luxury goods. It was a hangover from the war, and it wasn't until September that year when the embargo was lifted and we began to see Fenders, Gibsons and Gretschs. We were in heaven when the American guitars came over.'

American artists were also rare visitors. When they did tour the UK, they were invariably promoted by theatrical impresario Larry Parnes – a man with a burgeoning stable of homegrown artists like Billy Fury. 'I saw Duane Eddy on his first trip, and in 1960 I saw Eddie Cochran when he played at the Woolwich Granada. I had a little trio going on with a Selmer Truvoice amplifier that the bass player and I used – so you can imagine how horrendous that sounded – and ended up working for Larry Parnes. We happened to leave it at his office after a tour, and when we went to pick it up, Larry said, "Oh, Eddie Cochran's got it over at his hotel!" We went to the Cumberland Hotel at Marble Arch where he was staying, and I remember seeing his Gretsch in its case lying on the floor. We mumbled a few words and that was it. He'd been touring that January, went home and came back just before Easter, which is when he died.'



Albert's band worked at the famous 2i's – a subterranean coffee bar in Old Compton Street, Soho, London – launch pad of Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, and the happening hub of the nascent English rock n' roll scene. Before the band headed off to Germany, for the almost obligatory rites of passage that were Hamburg's red light areas and American bases, he became friends with Jimmy Page. 'We were good buddies, and I think Jimmy liked the Les Paul and Supro amplifier I was using so much that he went and bought a similar rig.'

Returning to England in 1964, and the London blues scene now in full swing, Albert joined RnB band Chris Farlowe and the Thunderbirds. 'They were a fairly exciting, happening band which meant I was working fairly regularly and able to give my folks some

money! I stayed with them for about four years during which time we had a number one record. There were some great players around at that time,' he recalls wistfully. 'Andy Summers [the Police] was playing with Zoot Money's Big Roll Band, and John McLaughlin was playing in a Soul band.'

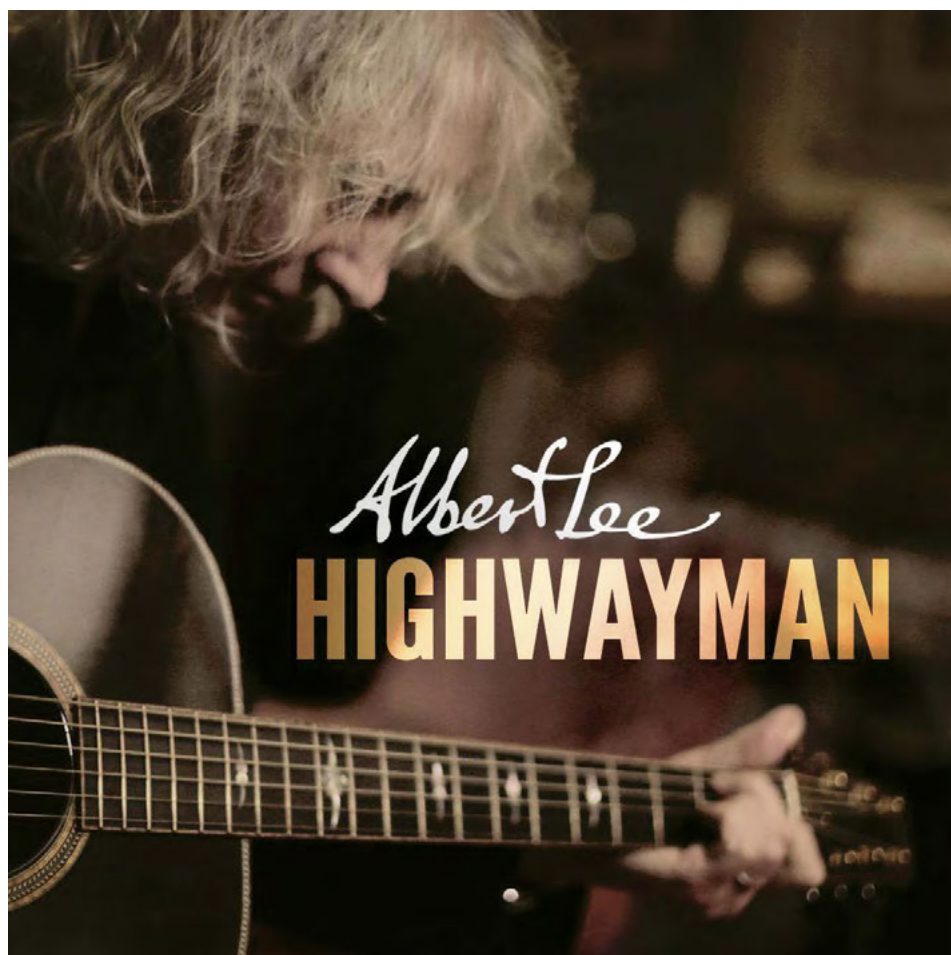
Albert had by now fallen under the spell of country records, particularly the twangy Fender Telecaster sound favoured by Buck Owens' guitarist Don Rich. 'I just loved that stuttering style,' he affirms.

But with a music scene dominated by the Beatles, and a few years before Dylan would bring out *Nashville Skyline*, country music was hardly flavour of the month. 'I finally met some guys into the same stuff, and we formed a band called Country Fever, mainly backing American

artists playing at American bases. It was a good experience, and I had a lot of encouragement from the Americans – but they all said I should be in the States. Of course, you take that with a pinch of salt, but I'd heard the same thing from Don Peach, the guitarist with the Everly Brothers. He'd said I should move to LA, told me about great players I'd never heard of like Howard Roberts and Glen Campbell, and said how much they'd like my playing. At the time, I realised Country Fever weren't going anywhere, no one took us seriously, and when we played Mervyn Conn's country festival at Wembley, I'd get maybe £10 for backing two or three artists.'

Country music did have a devoted following in the UK, but it had more to do with wearing the Stetson "10-gallon hat" and rhinestones,





than the groundbreaking bands on the west coast of America like the Flying Burrito Brothers. It was around this time that Albert also fell under the spell of Jerry Reed, and as he explains, began to develop his trademark style.

'I'd started to play a kind of hybrid fingerstyle, but realised by listening to Jerry Reed that he was using a thumb pick, as did Chet Atkins. I tried using one but just couldn't get into it. Then I realised that Jimmy Bryant, who was one of my favourite guitar players at that time, was obviously using a flat pick. So I began to use a flat pick and fingers, using my little finger a lot – something that most people don't. Then I was called by a BBC producer, who said Jerry Reed was coming over to do some radio and he asked if I'd like to do some rhythm guitar. Jerry Reed had written and recorded 'Guitar Man' that had been a huge hit for Elvis Presley – and after recording with Presley, he was one of the hottest country pickers in Nashville. So I got to hang out with Jerry for a couple of days, sat down and picked together, and one of his buddies said I played like Wayne Moss. I knew the name Wayne Moss, because he was a big session guy

in Nashville, and he was a guy who played with a thumb pick and fingers.'

In 1970 Albert finally went to the States as part of country rock band Head, Hands & Feet. 'We went out to LA, played showcases and really caused a bit of a stir; I had players coming to watch me, and I really felt at home in a place where the music I loved was happening. I joined the Crickets, did some work with them in the UK, and then got to stay with the band in Los Angeles. I became used to walking into bars and playing with people whose names I'd only known from records. One night, I went into this bar in Calabasas, Los Angeles, where Don Everly was singing, and he had Byron Berline on fiddle, Al Perkins on steel, and at one time the late Buddy Emmons on steel, too – the best steel player there's ever been. Being accepted, and just being able to hold my own with these guys was a great experience.'

He's too modest to say, but it's pretty clear that after a few years, the name Albert Lee was high up on the list of LA country session players. Joining Emmylou Harris' Hot Band and filling James Burton's shoes could not have been

a higher accolade. But after leaving the band and winding up his solo tour, Albert once again found himself out there as a gun for hire.

'I was in London doing a session with Glyn Johns, and Eric Clapton was on the session with some of his band. We worked on this album for three days and at the end Eric asked me if I'd like to go on the road. I thought, "Well this could be fun" and I ended up being part of his band for five years; a great experience.'

The two guitarists are still good friends, and Albert has appeared at three of Eric Clapton's mammoth *Crossroads* concerts. Having watched them, I wondered what were the logistics of having so many great players on one stage. 'The first couple I played, we'd get there early in the morning and just have a run through, usually with Vince Gill's band, and work out which guys would fit in, and pass around the solos.'

I couldn't resist asking Albert out of everyone he's worked with who he has the fondest memories of. Seems the Everly Brothers take that crown...

'I first met Phil in London in 1962 and Don a year later. I always caught up with them, they knew about my guitar playing and, in 1973 after they'd split up, I became Don's big buddy, singing with him on a few occasions, even live TV for BBC Two. But I always hoped if they got back together, I'd have the chance to do at least one gig, and it turned out to be their 1983 reunion concert at the Royal Albert Hall. It was a big success, and a few months later they said they were going to do an album and go on the road. To everyone's surprise it went on for another 26 years, and they've been a huge part of my life. Being able to stand behind Don and Phil with Buddy Emmons on my left side, well, musically, it couldn't get any better.'

Albert's new acoustic album, recorded largely using his favourite Huss & Dalton jumbo acoustic, reprises songs like the Everly's 'Bye Bye Love' and Buddy Holly's 'It's So Easy'. Shorn of solos and a rhythm section, the album shows a more intimate side of Albert's playing and singing. 'I was usually jet lagged and hoarse when we did the sessions, and although I was apprehensive, the comments I've heard so far have been quite good!' But then we all know that's no surprise, right?

Albert Lee appears at the London Acoustic Show on September 12 in association with LR Baggs and Ernie Ball. His new album *Highwayman* is out now; he tours throughout the UK in September. www.albertlee.co.uk



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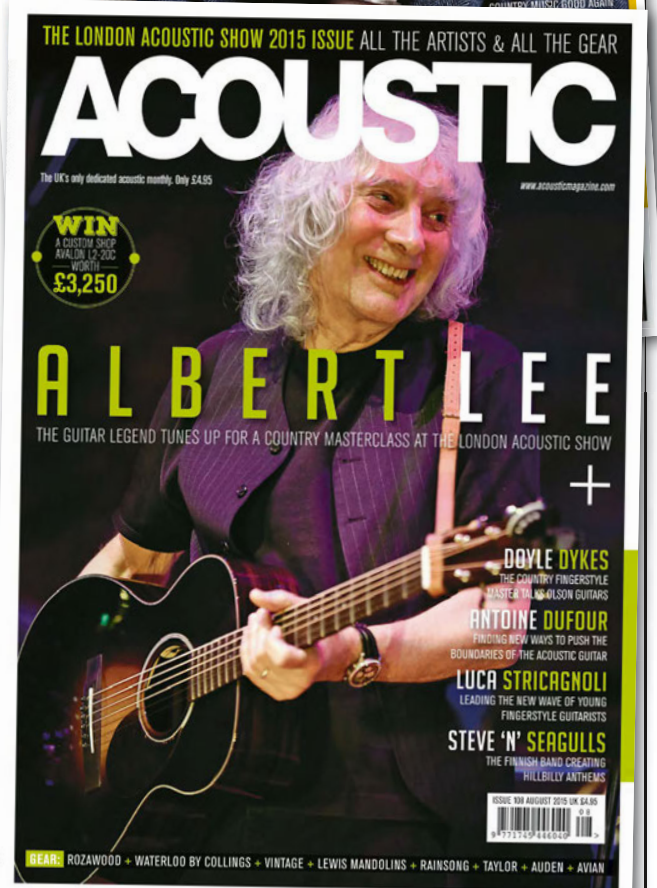
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ROZAWOOD DROP GUITAR



While a regular guitar would hold some drop tunings just fine, some of us want to go lower. Much lower. Try drop C tuning, for size. Standard guitars just weren't designed for super low tunings; the Rozawood Drop Guitar was.

Guy Little has the low down on the new Drop Guitar from Czech maker Rozawood.

Luthier Roman Zajíček set up the Rozawood workshop in the Czech Republic after years of fostering an interest in making acoustic instruments. Roman, an engineer by profession, loves music above all. His quest for beauty of acoustic tone led him to building instruments himself; he built his first instrument in 1979. His reputation as a man with deep sensitivity for wood and tone began to spread among high-end instrument lovers with every guitar he created. Rozawood now make acoustic guitars, mandolins, mandocellos and resonator guitars, aiming for high-end quality with only the finest materials.

We've seen a few Rozawood instruments in these pages, the last being their take on the mighty dreadnought by C.F. Martin. Build, sound, and value for money have always been exceptional, reaffirming Roman's reputation as one of the outstanding luthiers in Europe. Rozawood use only the finest selected solid tonewoods and top materials, hand making every instrument without so much as a whiff of CNC. In fact, the use of rare handcut pearl inlays is standard in their workshop, as is the tap-tuning of the tops, and the final quality sign off by Roman. With that in mind, you know you're getting an instrument of the highest calibre.

Here, we're looking at what Rozawood is calling their "Drop Guitar", hailed as the next step in their alternate tuned guitars programme. Back in 2009, Rozawood released the tenor guitar knowing that the demand for those was on the rise; in 2010, they released the bouzouki,



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ROZAWOOD DROP GUITAR

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Rozawood
Model: Drop Guitar
Retail Price: £2,876
Body Size: See copy
Made In: Czech Republic
Top: Sitka spruce master grade
Back and Sides: Plumwood
Neck: Honduran mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Schaller die cast
Nut Width: 45mm
Scale Length: 666mm
Onboard Electronics: No
Strings Fitted: Martin Lifespan 014-070
Left Handers: To order
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hiscoc Pro II

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A wonderful sounding guitar with an interesting story and voice to add depth to any player's tonal palette

Cons: The price may deter some; other than that, nothing.

Overall: It's a versatile guitar packing a lot of punch and a lot of fun

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

Rozawood Guitars

www.rozawood.cz



and then in 2011 they released their baritone model. I guess the Rozawood Drop Guitar was the next logical step along from the baritone and that's exactly where this guitar sits, but what differentiates it from the baritone guitar?

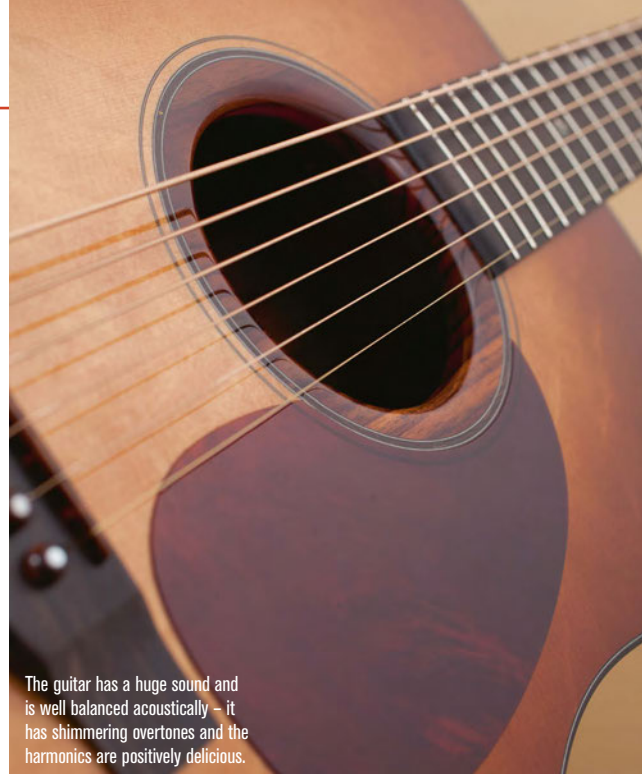
While the baritone guitar is tuned a perfect fifth below a regular guitar, the Rozawood Drop Guitar is developed for those guitar players who are interested in drop tuning or playing various styles of open tunings. Now, while a regular guitar would hold some drop tunings just fine, some of us want to go lower. Much lower. Try drop C tuning, for size. Standard guitars just weren't designed for super low tunings; the Rozawood Drop Guitar was.

BUILD QUALITY

The Rozawood Drop Guitar has a slightly bigger body than a dreadnought, a longer scale at 666mm, and has Rozawood's unique double X-brace

construction used for the top. A nice feature you see on most (if not all) Rozawood instruments is their wooden convex rosette.

The dimensions of the top bracing are very close to those they use for their baritone guitar. The intended result is a full, robust and deep sound that could be used



The guitar has a huge sound and is well balanced acoustically – it has shimmering overtones and the harmonics are positively delicious.

in many styles – starting with the folk fingerstyle players to modern rock bands.

Straight away, the Rozawood Drop Guitar makes a huge impression – and I'm not talking about the size. It's that's lovely light sunburst finish paired with a nitro lacquer. It just looks lovely, doesn't it? Since you asked, the size isn't all that bad. When I heard they were sending this guitar to review and that it was a step along (or down, see what I did there?) from their baritone guitar, I almost imagined I'd need some sort of Stretch Armstrong ability to get my arms around the thing. Truth be told, it's not massive at all. It sits comfortably on your lap and doesn't feel obtrusive at all – just think of it as a chubby dreadnought with a big bum. The body length is 50.8cm, the width measuring in at 41.5cm and the depth is 10 – 12.5cm.

The top of the Rozawood Drop Guitar is an interesting one. It's master grade Sitka spruce, but it looks to me like it has a hint of bearclaw figuring. Bearclaw spruce isn't a type of spruce, more an irregularity in the growth. I've spoken to many luthiers about bearclaw spruce, and Dana Bourgeois told me that the bearclaw effect is exclusive to old, dense trees. Stiff and old means you can cut it thinly and its response will be quick – it also means expensive. 30 years ago, no builder would have made guitars using a top with bearclaw figuring, yet now it's an up sell. Go figure, right? Anyway, it sure is pretty. The back and sides are from plumwood, again an interesting one aesthetically. Here it's pale brown with streaks of orange and red mixed in. Due to the small size of plum trees, swirled or irregular grain, as well as knots, are common in plumwood – and here that makes for a guitar that'll be sure to turn heads. There's a Honduran mahogany neck with a hybrid V/C profile to it – comfortable and kind of chunky. It's perfectly balanced for the duties this guitar is made to undertake and has 20 frets, perfectly finished, on an ebony board with a 666mm scale length. The nut width is 45mm, so a little wider than some may be used to, but it makes for plenty of space for fingerstylists.

The next thing that stands out to me is the thick "tortoloid" binding, setting off against the pale sunburst beautifully. You see tortoloid used on a lot of guitars as pickguards, giving them the old-school sort of vibe. Now where we'd usually see a bone nut and saddle, we've got snakewood for both. This is a nice touch and reeks of understated class. I like this a lot. The ebony headplate



Collings MF5 Deluxe Varnish #1191

is another touch that really makes its handmade origin known in the subtlest of ways. I'm not sold on the tuners, purely from a visual point of view. Functional and accurate they are (they're Scaller tuners, so they're great), but I think I'd have opted for open back, or something with nice ebony buttons perhaps.

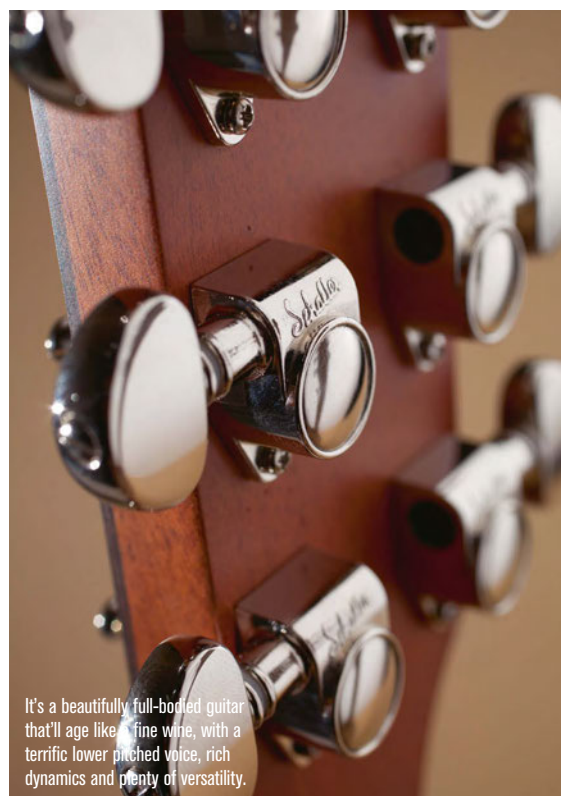
Anyway, they just seem a bit "standard" on what really is not a "standard" guitar. I'm not a huge fan of the semi-transparent pickguard, either. It's thin plastic with a red tint to it showing through some of the spruce underneath. It kind of looks like a vintage pickguard until you squint and realise it is indeed clear. Anyway, what it's wearing has no bearing on how it sounds – and how it sounds is sublime.

SOUND QUALITY

Most of us will play in drop tunings at some point, and then a lot of us will want to go even lower to drop C, drop A, B, among a variety of other open tunings that add a visceral sound to your mix. It's when we drop tune too far that we start noticing problems, though: the lowest string feeling too floppy, sounding too muddy or boomy, and bad intonation. The reason this happens is because standard guitars aren't made for super low tunings. Lower notes require longer and thicker strings, while

higher notes require shorter and thinner strings (that's why bass guitars are bigger than standard guitars).

It's important to note that the lowest tuned strings are now getting into a frequency range that really isn't great when played on a standard guitar (assuming B Standard tuning or lower). The key factor in improving the feel, tone and



It's a beautifully full-bodied guitar that'll age like fine wine, with a terrific lower pitched voice, rich dynamics and plenty of versatility.

intonation at these super low tunings is the longer scale length, ergo affecting the string tension. Here, we have an increased scale length which allows for a good feel and tone with perfect intonation. I put the Drop Guitar into an open C variation and the guitar sounded right at home. The string tension is perfect and it came with Martin Lifespan 014-070 as standard. The lowest string isn't floppy in the slightest and the sound couldn't be farther from sounding muddy or boomy.

The guitar has a huge sound and is well balanced acoustically – it has shimmering overtones and the harmonics are positively delicious. It projects well, too, and you'll be waiting a while if you expect that sustain to die out – it just rings, and rings, and...

A simple fingerpicking combo with percussive slaps becomes a somewhat staple when testing this guitar, but drop it into DADGAD intervals (AEADEA), and it sounds delightfully orchestral with a piano-like soundscape and tremendous clarity. The 45mm nut width and spacious bridge spacing mean it's immediately comfortable for fingerstyle or a hybrid picking and strumming style, which really helps to voice the low strings. It's a beautifully full-bodied guitar that'll age like a fine wine, with a terrific lower pitched voice, rich dynamics and plenty of versatility.

CONCLUSION

This guitar is a triumph of style and substance – it's pretty, flawlessly constructed and beautifully rich in its voice. If tone and quality is your thing, then Rozawood ought to be on your "must try" list. I imagine a lot of you will be keen to explore the depths of drop tunings and if that's you, then you can't get any better than the Drop Guitar. Perfect for singer-songwriters with a penchant for drop tunings à la Ben Howard, fingerstylists wanting to add to their tonal palette, or just anyone looking for a distinctive voice. The low strings mean partial capos would be a lot of fun here, so I can almost picture some CandyRat whizz playing to a lot of awe-struck faces. with this guitar.

Guy Little

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WATERLOO WL-14 LTR



Pulling it from its TKL case feels like you just discovered an untouched Kalamazoo or Gibson L-00 in your grandparents' attic, only it's better – much better...

Born of Bill Collings' fascination for Depression-era guitars comes the new line from the Texas luthier; **Guy Little** ponders over a ladder-braced Waterloo.

Collings acoustic guitars have been on the wish list of many guitarists since the 1990s, but Bill Collings founded the company two decades before that, in 1973. His curiosity regarding how the various physical components of an instrument add up to superior tone led him to study many instruments from the pre-war era in order to see exactly what made them tick. Add this to his enduring mission to ensure that every single aspect of building is done at optimum levels and you have acoustic guitars that are second to none.

Bill has always been infatuated with guitars – and not just expensive ones. When he first started building, the guitars of the 20s and 30s (the cheaper ones) would intrigue him – the character, the tone. The issue was that they rarely played well. These Depression-era guitars were mainly sold via catalogues and mail order under all different kinds of sub-brand guitar names (Kalamazoo and Gibson, for instance).

The guitars had simple appointments and weren't built from fancy woods. They often looked a little disheveled, too. They didn't sand the braces; they didn't clean up their excess glue. They were made quickly and were all about function. Some really great guitars were made that way and these were the guitars that ended up in the hands of the influential players of the day.

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WATERLOO

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Waterloo by Collings**Model:** WL-14 LTR**Retail Price:** £1,999**Body Size:** Based on the L-00**Made In:** Texas, USA**Top:** Spruce**Back and Sides:** Solid mahogany**Neck:** Solid mahogany**Fingerboard:** Solid rosewood**Frets:** 19**Tuners:** Golden Age Restoration**Nut Width:** 1 & 3/4"**Scale Length:** 628mm**Onboard Electronics:** No**Strings Fitted:** High quality USA**Left Handers:** To order**Gig Bag/Case Included:** TKL hardcase

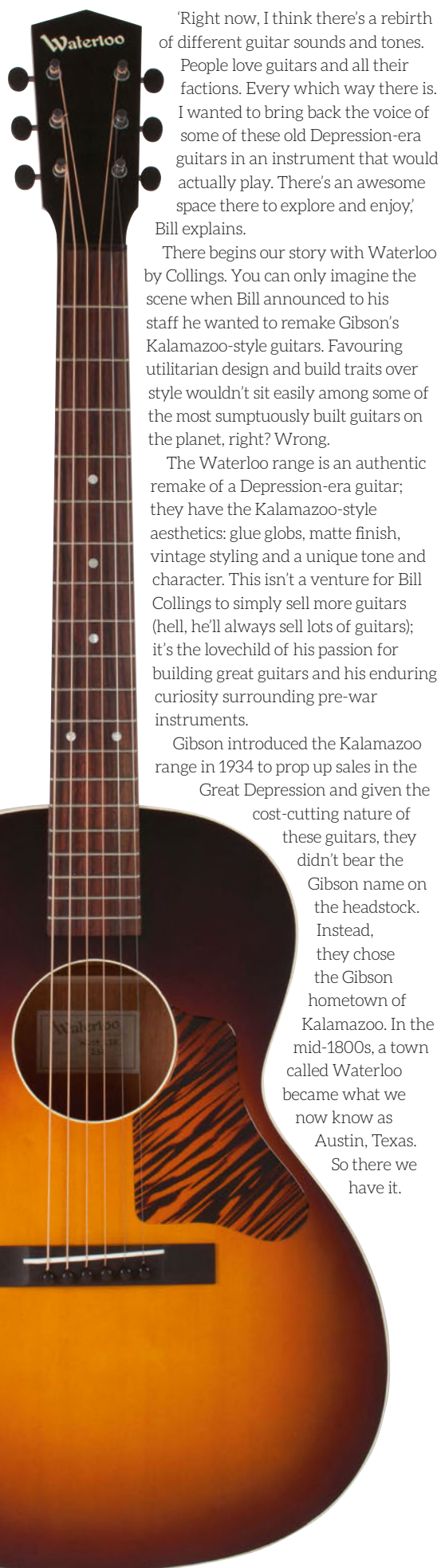
ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: The build quality is akin to that of the best; the character and charm will win people over before they even play it**Cons:** People will either love or hate the finish imperfections whether they're intended or not**Overall:** A stunning midrange and an instrument with a great story to tell

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★**Build Quality:** ★★★★★**Value for Money:** ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

Guitar XS / Waterloo Guitarswww.waterlooguitars.com

'Right now, I think there's a rebirth of different guitar sounds and tones.

People love guitars and all their factions. Every which way there is. I wanted to bring back the voice of some of these old Depression-era guitars in an instrument that would actually play. There's an awesome space there to explore and enjoy,' Bill explains.

There begins our story with Waterloo by Collings. You can only imagine the scene when Bill announced to his staff he wanted to remake Gibson's Kalamazoo-style guitars. Favouring utilitarian design and build traits over style wouldn't sit easily among some of the most sumptuously built guitars on the planet, right? Wrong.

The Waterloo range is an authentic remake of a Depression-era guitar; they have the Kalamazoo-style aesthetics: glue globs, matte finish, vintage styling and a unique tone and character. This isn't a venture for Bill Collings to simply sell more guitars (hell, he'll always sell lots of guitars); it's the lovechild of his passion for building great guitars and his enduring curiosity surrounding pre-war instruments.

Gibson introduced the Kalamazoo range in 1934 to prop up sales in the Great Depression and given the cost-cutting nature of these guitars, they didn't bear the Gibson name on the headstock. Instead, they chose the Gibson hometown of Kalamazoo. In the mid-1800s, a town called Waterloo became what we now know as Austin, Texas. So there we have it.



The sound is forceful without being brash and heavy – and it's reminiscent of those old Gibson parlour guitars. It already has lots of that chunky dried out wood sort of tone right out of the box.

Waterloo by Collings isn't a budget gateway into Collings Guitars; it's a different beast all together. These guitars start at £2,000, about half the price of a Collings. I'll say it now: if you want to buy into the Collings brand on a budget without "getting" this Waterloo range, you'd waste your money. If I just described you, then buy a secondhand Collings with your £2k instead. If you do "get" these guitars, then £2k is going to be well spent. Firstly, it's because this range shares the intrinsic glue (if you'll excuse the pun) holding Waterloo and Collings side by side – and that's the non-negotiable issue of where these guitars are made. They are all made by the same luthiers, in the same workshop, in Austin, Texas.

Here we have the WL-14 LTR with ladder bracing. As a general rule of thumb, ladder bracing tends to be a bit more responsive and articulate. The topic of who invented the X-braced guitar is often a fiercely debated one, but there's no denying that C.F. Martin is responsible for the popularity it enjoys. Martin started using it for their gut-string guitars well before the Civil War and, ironically, the real advantage of X-pattern bracing wasn't fully realised until steel strings and the extra tension they brought with them began to be more widely used in the early years of the 20th century. Today, we like alternatives. And if they're seen as a bit "old school" or "vintage" we tend to love them.

Ladder bracing is duly named because the parallel horizontal braces resemble the rungs of a ladder – and this bracing was found on those mass-produced Depression-era guitars I mentioned earlier because it was quick and cheap to manufacture. Today, ladder-braced guitars are back – and while it would be foolish to pretend that they're going to threaten the dominance of X-bracing, they do offer players a different tone.

The WL-14 is the flagship model of the Waterloo guitar line and it's available in both ladder and X-bracing. You can also choose the finish (matte black or sunburst), neck shape and either a truss rod or T-bar. The guitar I have to test has the matte sunburst finish, and an awesomely chunky V-profile neck which will feel right at home for vintage guitar purveyors – and I just love the chunky neck profile. It has a roomy 1 & 3/4" nut width and you've got 2 & 3/8" string spacing here – vintage all the way, baby. (Although, should you require a slim neck, they're available.) The top of these guitars is solid spruce with a semi-gloss nitrocellulose lacquer. The back and sides are from mahogany with single binding around the top edge. It's as stripped back as you could possibly get; there are no superfluous adornments and these guitars are made for one thing: glorious vintage tone.

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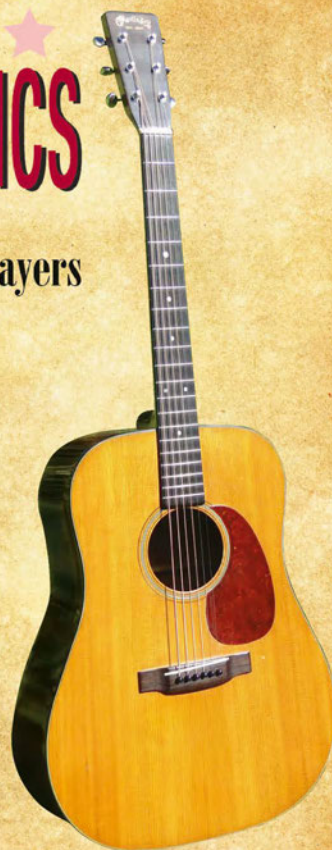
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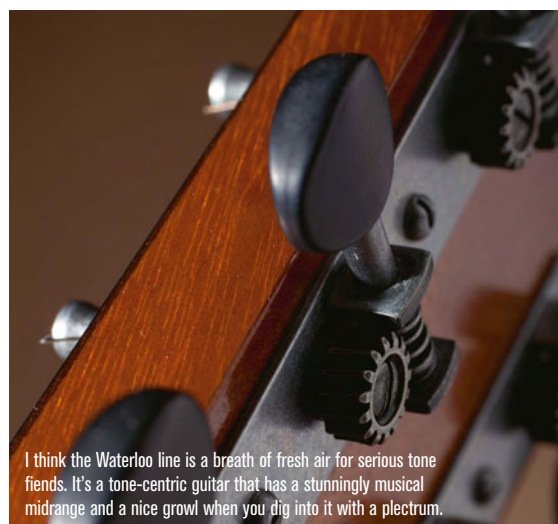
The unbound mahogany neck, cool ivoroid soundhole binding and tiger stripe pickguard throws emphasis to the old-time, stripped down vibe. There's no question here: the construction is flawlessly in keeping with a vintage instrument. We've got a bone cut-through saddle, ebony nut and fretboard, rectangular bridge, and some lovely Golden Age Restoration tuners that round the whole look off beautifully. The neck and string spacing make for a welcoming playing experience, transporting you back to a stage with Robert Johnson, Lead Belly, and a 12-string ladder-braced Stella.

Now, there's an elephant in the room. It's the finish. Or rather, the imperfections herein. Before I say anymore though, it's supposed to be this way. For some, glue spill on a £2k guitar will scare you away. However, it's rather the skill of the Waterloo team in that recreating these guitars involves the proficiency to do so with even the littlest of things in mind – for instance, the glue spill. It's all part of what makes these guitars truly authentic. It will challenge you to hate it – it did me at first – but after that thing clicks in the back of your mind and you just “get” it, you'd be complaining if this guitar indeed was perfect. “Well it can't be truly authentic if the braces are shaved perfectly and the glue is immaculate,” you'd say. Let's avoid using the word “finish”; the “craft” has been honed to the point of leaving just about the same amount of rough-cut wood and squeezed glue here and there inside the guitar to reflect an accurate time stamp. The back and sides show off a lovely mahogany grain, not hidden by the nitro finish – even on the matte black finish, you can still see that raw wood underneath. Anyway, these things smack you square in the face with character and charm – let's see if the same can be said about the sound...

Before playing this guitar, pulling it from its TKL case feels like you just discovered an untouched Kalamazoo or Gibson L-00 in your

grandparents' attic, only it's better – much better, in fact. It's as light as a feather, too.

The WL-14 LTR's sound is squarely of a classic vintage persuasion powered by a pronounced mid-range honk. It's tailor made for pickers who love a bit of blues and



I think the Waterloo line is a breath of fresh air for serious tone fiends. It's a tone-centric guitar that has a stunningly musical midrange and a nice growl when you dig into it with a plectrum.

old time tunes – although anyone with a penchant for quality and traditional aesthetics will love it.

In my experience playing ladder-braced guitars, they're not usually as loud as their X-braced counterparts, but this is an exception. It's loud, proud, and responsive to the touch with a quick, dry attack – and also with a tight percussive sound. The sound is forceful without being brash and heavy – and it's reminiscent of those old Gibson parlour guitars. It already has lots of that chunky dried out wood sort of tone right out of the box. In some guitars, we could describe the sound as a little boxy with no sparkly trebles, but the charm here more than makes up for that – and making this guitar with sparkly trebles isn't what the Waterloo range is about.

Bill says that the tone of ladder bracing is less focused and so the overall tonal spectrum blends together in a way you wouldn't get with X bracing. However, that strong, dry midrange and thump of the bass notes isn't muddy at all. If we were comparing it to an X-braced guitar, the X-bracing would produce a clearer, balanced and more defined sound for sure, but the sound of this guitar is defined by its ladder bracing and the midrange it produces for people fingerpicking fingerstyle blues. We're looking at this guitar in isolation, and the sound of it shouldn't be bell-like and completely balanced across every string, note, and fret. That's not what it's about. There's a certain gritty nature about its tone; it's raw, naked, and has a lightness and unrefined demeanor.

The Waterloo will sit well in a country meets blues and folk outfit. Although it's probably not the best all-rounder guitar, if you're after a certain pre-war authenticity in a brand new guitar then this is one for you. It couldn't be farther away from a modern sounding guitar and it won't be the most versatile, but that's not bad thing here.

The Waterloo guitar line is a look back in time to when there was a need for soulful tone that could be coaxed from simple instruments. The blues, country, and folk music played on these instruments shaped the sound of music for generations to come. I think the Waterloo line is a breath of fresh air for serious tone fiends. It's a tone-centric guitar that has a stunningly musical midrange and a nice growl when you dig into it with a plectrum. It's a humble workhorse guitar that'd be equally at home, in the studio, on the sofa, or on a stage. Whatever the case, it's built for the kind of no-frills music that comes straight from the gut.

Guy Little

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VINTAGE GEMINI



Looks-wise, this guitar would be an eye catcher even without the pickguard; the antique finish and slotted headstock set it apart from almost anything in its price range.



Quality-wise, it upholds Vintage's reputation; there might not be the impressive detailing you'd find on a £2,000 guitar, but everything here is well executed.

Vintage and Paul Brett claim this is two guitars in one, but can it really live up to that? **Sam Wise** finds out.

JHS' Vintage brand impresses us often here at *Acoustic*. Despite the budget price tag, and a name redolent of 80s shopping catalogue purchases, Vintage repeatedly produce some of the best value for money guitars you can find, often giving their more expensive competition a scare. Former 70s rocker Paul Brett, meanwhile, not only regularly regales *Acoustic* readers with his vintage guitar expertise, he has managed to parlay that knowledge into a line of vintage inspired signature models. The latest edition to Brett's range is the Gemini, a guitar which he and Vintage claim can perform equally well as a baritone or a standard tuned guitar.

BUILD QUALITY

Vintage sent us two of these, one strung standard, and the other with a set of heavier gauge baritone strings to allow it to be tuned B-B, or even A-A, but as they are otherwise identical, we'll save that comparison for the sounds section. Everyone knows Paul loves old guitars, and the Gemini carries lots of his signature style; the solid spruce top is finished in an antique brown which is echoed on the solid mahogany back and sides, but the pickguard styling is a departure from his previous instruments. The top is bound in white plastic, with the back not bound at all, and the rosette is again a super simple white ring, almost hidden by the pickguard. The mahogany neck is cut in a lovely chunky vintage V profile with an unbound sonokeling fingerboard. The scale length is 24.75 inches, which, interestingly for a guitar with pretensions to baritone tuning, is not even at the long end of the typical standard guitar range, with 14

frets to the body, and 21 in total. The peghead is Brett's favoured slotted style, with three on-a-plate open geared tuners. The very simple rectangular sonokeling bridge has a plastic compensated saddle, and the nut is similarly plastic. The guitar is fitted with Fishman's redoubtable Matrix VT1 pickup system, and in keeping with the vintage appearance, there's no head unit or onboard EQ; you simply plug into the endpin jack and go.

Looks-wise, this guitar would be an eye catcher even without the pickguard; the antique finish and slotted headstock set it apart from almost anything in its price range, and it's convincingly old school; you can imagine a guitar like this in a black and white photograph with Robert Johnson. Add in that very unusual pickguard and you've got something that might polarise opinion; we really like it, it has the standout visual appeal of something like Fender's Pawn Shop Series, though we would probably make the pickguard tortoiseshell. An all-solid guitar for £400 is bargain basement territory, and rather than compromise on materials, Vintage has held back on any fancy appointments, which is aided by the retro look. Quality-wise, though, it upholds Vintage's reputation; there might not be the impressive detailing you'd find on a £2,000 guitar, but everything here is well executed; the action is a good compromise, intonation is excellent, there are no rough fret ends or other telltale signs of corner cutting.

SOUNDS & PLAYABILITY

First off, we love to play Paul's guitars; the V profile to the neck is something which is all too uncommon these



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VINTAGE GEMINI

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Vintage**Model:** Gemini**Retail Price:** £399**Body Size:** Parlour**Made In:** Far East**Top:** Solid spruce**Back and Sides:** Solid mahogany**Neck:** Mahogany**Fingerboard:** Sonokeling**Frets:** 21**Tuners:** Chrome open gear**Scale Length:** 628mm**Onboard Electronics:** Fishman Matrix VT1**Strings Fitted:** High quality USA**Gig Bag/Case Included:** Padded carry bag

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Great look, nice balanced tone, lovely V profile neck**Cons:** Won't be everyone's idea of a baritone**Overall:** Offers a lot for the money with a reputable name behind it

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★**Build Quality:** ★★★★★**Value for Money:** ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

John Hornby Skewes

www.jhs.co.uk

days, and we love the way it welcomes the fretting hand. If you're a real speed freak, you might find it restrictive, but how many of us really play that way? The body is not so big as to be obstructive, and the relatively short scale makes for quite a light string tension.

Picking up the standard strung guitar first, it delivers what we would hope for from the wood combination; bright and sparkling top end, warmish midrange, and a strong, fairly focussed bass. It's a nice enough picker,

but really comes into its own when you strum it hard; there's plenty of headroom, and we couldn't compromise the tone no matter how hard we pushed it. These guitars have to survive long sea journeys and a big change of climate from their origin in the Far East, so they can't hope to be as light and responsive as a handmade guitar from this part of the world, but they are so much better than one could buy at this price a few years ago that it seems churlish to complain. The baritone tuned model feels immediately different due to the significantly heavier string gauge and, sonically, it's very different too. The decision to go with a relatively short scale has an impact here; plenty of standard tuned guitars have a scale length in this range and Taylor, for instance, uses a 27-inch scale for their baritones – here the scale length is 24.75 inches. The scale here results in quite a thumping quality to the bass, unless you play very gently; delicate fingerstyle reveals what might have been, with the lowest string blooming harmonics as it decays, but dig in, and you get slightly muddy, very vintage tone which really

Realistically, you're going to buy this for one thing or the other; nobody is going to change strings twice a week (or twice a set), so make sure you're testing this in the format you intend to use it.

lends itself to blues and rock and roll licks, but isn't friendly to those who want a really clearly defined bass. Playing up the neck, there is a tendency to a little rattle too; nothing unmanageable, but we can't help wishing for a longer scale version.

CONCLUSION

If you want a largish bodied, solid guitar with vintage styling, you can't go wrong with this. It has striking good looks and a lovely balanced tone – and is an awful lot of guitar for the money. Does it live up to the two guitars in one tag though? Well, only if you want a pretty specific type of baritone. Realistically, though, you're going to buy this for one thing or the other; nobody is going to change strings twice a week (or twice a set), so make sure you're testing this in the format you intend to use it, and you will be a very happy customer indeed.

Sam Wise



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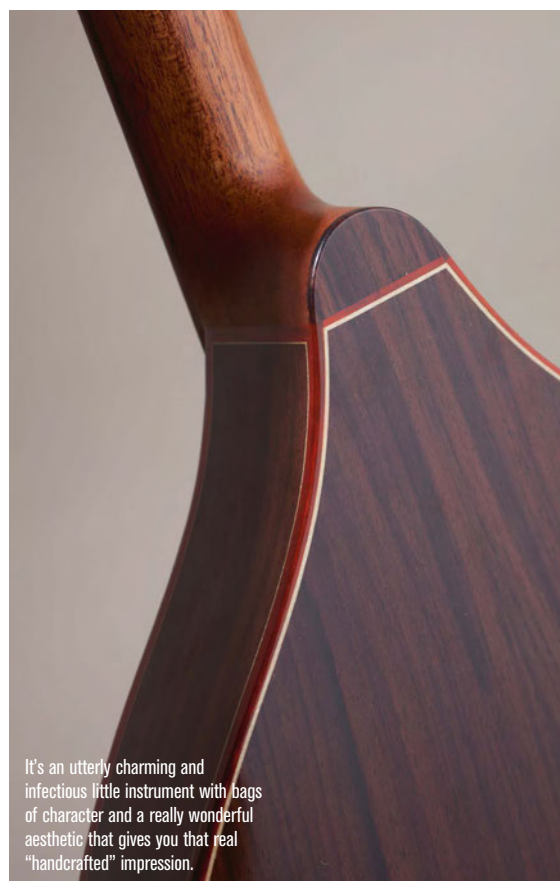
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MORGAN LEWIS DELUXE ROSEWOOD



In the space of one tiny mandolin manufactured overseas we've already been treated to a combination of six different woods – all solid too, no laminates here.



It's an utterly charming and infectious little instrument with bags of character and a really wonderful aesthetic that gives you that real "handcrafted" impression.

Alun Lower takes a look at a little gem of a mandolin offering luthier-built quality at an affordable price point.

Designed by UK-based luthier Martyn Banks of Oakwood Instruments, Morgan Lewis Mandolins may well be a new name to most of you. If this delightful little instrument is anything to go by then it's a name you really should try to remember. Martyn has over 30 years' experience designing and crafting a spectacular range of mandolins, and also a fascinating selection of one-offs and unique instruments, such as the 15-string harp guitar, hammer dulcimers, lyres, Swedish mandolas and even a bouzouki styled after a Gibson SG! It's an eclectic lot for sure and immediately gives you confidence that even a range of instruments designed as a relatively "budget" alternative are going to have a fair amount of flair, intelligence and passion put into their design.

Guitars manufactured overseas to high specifications are getting more common these days and it truly does offer us guitarists some wonderful new options at remarkable price points. At £900, this little mandolin may still seem pricey to more casual players but trust me, if you're a mando fan then this little gem really does have an awful lot to offer. So, let's get stuck in, shall we?

BUILD QUALITY

I'm really never sure what to expect with instruments of this type when opening them up for the first time. Some will focus on a selection of simple, common tonewoods executed flawlessly, while others try to dazzle with something a bit more exotic, sometimes missing the mark by focusing a little too much on the decorative

side of things. Every now and then, you get something that hits that perfect sweet spot between those two worlds, and I never expected to find such an example on a mandolin! Open the case of a Morgan Lewis Deluxe though and I've got to say, you're in for a treat.

For an instrument coming in at under a grand, the Lewis really does "pop" from the first moment as it just looks stunning – you start with the usual spruce top (not too many surprises there), featuring a lovely grain and finished in gloss (a plush nitrocellulose lacquer, since you were wondering). As suggested by the model name, the back and sides are rosewood, immediately offering that strong contrast that so many love to see with this combination. What makes it stand out though is the red padauk and maple used for the binding – this offers such a lovely partner to both woods and stands apart from the neck also, which is satin-finished mahogany topped with an ebony fingerboard. So in the space of one tiny mandolin manufactured overseas we've already been treated to a combination of six different woods – all solid too, no laminates here.

Elsewhere, the fingerboard features a pretty slither of maple binding and genuine mother-of-pearl inlays. The headstock sports a rosewood veneer with the Lewis logo also inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Further down the body you are treated to an abalone soundhole, with the strings anchored by an ebony bridge and bone saddle, arranged in a static rather than floating style to aid intonation and tuning stability. Round the back of the neck, there's a finely carved volute at the top, leading to a nicely carved heel down by the body, again capped



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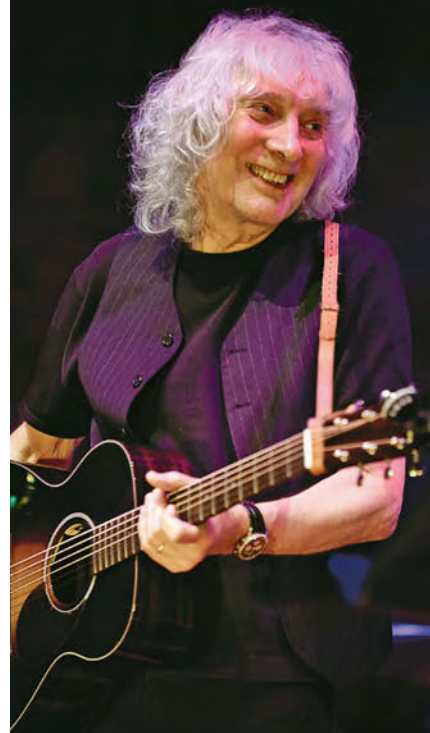
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MORGAN LEWIS DELUXE ROSEWOOD

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Morgan Lewis

Model: Deluxe Rosewood

Retail Price: £900

Body Size: A-style / teardrop

Made In: Far East

Top: Solid spruce

Back and Sides: Rosewood

Neck: Mahogany

Fingerboard: Ebony

Frets: 20

Tuners: Chrome

Nut Width: 32mm

Scale Length: 362mm

Onboard Electronics: No

Strings Fitted: High quality

USA-made

Left Handers: N/A

Gig Bag/Case: Included: Case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Flawless construction with a lovely well-rounded and full-bodied sound

Cons: Some may prefer a classic F-style body shape than the A-shape here; no major cons to declare

Overall: A bargain for the serious mandolin player; it's got the handmade feel without the sky high price tag

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

The Music Room

www.themusicroom-online.co.uk

with a slice of rosewood for that extra touch of class.

The amount of detail packed into a mandolin of this price is a really impressive thing to see. And try as I might, I struggled to find a construction flaw with any of it. The quality of finishing with both the nitro finish of the body and the satin finish of the neck is high.

So, too, is the fit and polish of the frets – maybe not the highest of quality but certainly well up there with

regular acoustics in this price range. The

use of padauk for the binding is a really lovely choice that really did set off my admiration of this mandolin, and really when you take into account the size of the instrument you've just got to appreciate the build quality on offer here.

SOUND QUALITY

Of course, good looks count for precious little if the instrument itself can't hold its own in a musical sense, and too often I have tried glamorous-looking instruments that have fallen short in this regard. However, I'm pleased to report that the Lewis offers a wonderful, shimmering chime that should make all but the hardest to please of mando enthusiasts grin from ear to ear. Far from the brittle, sharp mess it could have been – there is depth of tone here that befits a serious instrument and it's a real pleasure to listen to.

The teardrop-shaped body has never been a huge

hit with me but I have to admit I really loved the tone of the Lewis, so maybe I've been converted! Where I would have perhaps expected a shrill, boxy tone there is instead just a singing, glassy treble backed up by a punchy, throaty quality that supports the lower strings to give a full-voiced instrument. The mid-range is scooped ever so slightly and that is likely a characteristic of the rosewood, which lends the Lewis

a very defined character with distinct highs and lows pairing together in perfect harmony.

There will be those out there that prefer that mid-range push of course and for them only a mahogany-backed instrument will do, but in all other cases the Lewis will do the job admirably indeed.

In addition to the core tone, the construction quality of the Lewis means there are plenty of zinging harmonics to be had, with a rich, flowing sustain backing up what I feel is a very woody character packed with charm and personality. It's an addictive, moreish tone that I just wanted to keep playing for hours on end. Intonation too is impressive – damn near perfect I'd say across the board apart from the very upper reaches of the lower strings, which were coming out just slightly off to my ear. This was very slight though and it honestly wouldn't trouble me at all if I were to buy this mandolin from the shop tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

As you might have guessed, I've come away rather impressed with the Morgan Lewis Rosewood Deluxe. It's an utterly charming and infectious little instrument with bags of character and a really wonderful aesthetic that gives you that real "handcrafted" impression. Depending on your level of enthusiasm for the mandolin in general, the £900 asking price for this example is either going to make your eyes water or look like a real bargain – and I seriously hope it's the latter. For serious enthusiasts and above on

more of a modest budget, this could be the ideal chance to get something that feels unique and special without selling your car or a vital organ. It may be manufactured in the Far East, but this mandolin does genuinely come across as something that has been crafted with love by an experienced luthier.

It's not easy to get that across with such a small instrument, but when it does, it stands out – and the Morgan Lewis Rosewood Deluxe definitely stands out.

Alun Lower

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RAINSONG WS1000



The evenness and balance of tone is what hits you square in the face when first hearing this guitar. Simply running up and down a scale yields superior clarity.

An all-graphite guitar without so much as a shaving of wood, braces, struts or, well, anything we know about guitars other than its shape – this can't be right, can it? **Guy Little** has the answers.

RainSong Guitars began on the Hawaiian island of Maui when a fledgling classical guitarist John Decker witnessed a torrential downpour while attending a wedding. The guitar player performing for the guests had a bit of a dilemma: carry on playing and risk being drenched by the tropical shower, which would cause irreversible damage to his treasured guitar, or run for cover and risk the wrath of the bride. That day, John Decker was inspired to create a new kind of instrument, one that would play beautifully while enduring life's summers and winters, bumps and bruises – and, well, most things life could throw at it (save for, say, a brick).

The instrument that John Decker created became the world's first all-graphite guitar, known as the RainSong guitar (get it?), and it now comes in all shapes and sizes, from a parlour travel guitar to a boom box of a dreadnought. But that's about where the similarities to a conventional guitar ends – these instruments are packed with forward-thinking technology that means you could submerge it into the Arctic ocean and it'd still sing beautifully for you. Or, if you fancy, you could drag it through the Sahara strumming it on the back of a camel without worrying about the neck warping or soundboard splitting.

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RAINSONG WS1000

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: RainSong
Model: WS1000
Retail Price: £1,969 (direct import price)
Body Size: Grand auditorium
Made In: USA
Top: All-graphite with Projection Tuned Layering
Back and Sides: All-graphite
Neck: Single piece all-graphite neck
Fingerboard: Epoxy
Frets: 21
Tuners: Gotoh
Nut Width: 1.75"
Scale Length: 25.4"
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Prefix Plus-T
Strings Fitted: Elixir
Left Handers: N/A
Gig Bag/Case Included: TKL hardcase

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Innovative construction methods and carbon soundboard give you a distinctive crystal clear tone

Cons: The traditionalists wouldn't be seen dead with this guitar...

Overall: If you're constantly travelling in fear of damaging your acoustic guitar, then you should buy a RainSong.

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★
Build Quality: ★★★★★
Value for Money: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

Promenade Music
www.promenademusic.co.uk



Since the mid-'90s, RainSong guitars has been building high-end graphite guitars that deliver a clear, balanced tone while remaining unaffected by humidity and temperature changes – for this reason alone these guitars were/are a big hit with travelling guitarists.

Along the way, the company, now based in Washington State, USA, has refined its designs and construction techniques, notably developing a patented Projection Tuned Layering process that allows the body to be built with no bracing whatsoever – and let me tell you, this takes a little getting used to. Just don't look inside the soundhole; it's a trippy and uncomfortable experience. Not because it's some wormhole to a Manchester nightclub in the '90s, but because it just doesn't seem right without any kerfing or soundboard braces.

This review subject is the RainSong WS1000 and is a grand auditorium cutaway with Fishman preamp. The company produces seven unique series and five body shapes to choose from. The WS1000 comes from their "Classic Series" and promises crystalline clarity from the Projection Tuned Layering on the carbon soundboard. Here's how the guitar works...

Firstly, the RainSong WS1000 Grand Auditorium guitar is constructed from graphite and, when coupled with



In addition to a built-in chromatic tuner, the guitar's Prefix Plus-T adds a brilliance control and a phase switch and notch filter to help fight feedback on stage.

its Projection Tuned Layering, the guitar delivers a superb tone. There's crystal-like detail across the whole tonal spectrum – it really is impeccably balanced and seriously loud. The balance comes down to the uniformed stiffness of the soundboard. The RainSong guitar's all-graphite construction and Projection Tuned Layering remove the need for bracing by providing uniform stiffness across the soundboard.

Pure carbon tone is an utterly unique sound – it's new to me, for sure, but it's a sound that will become instantly recognisable. It is clear, rich and resonant, similar to a piano, with a treble that rings with clarity and a bass that is warm without being muddy. Projection Tuned Layering was developed by RainSong to ensure that all RainSong guitars have the detail, warmth, and volume of the classic carbon sound – and you can expect the same across the whole range of RainSong (save for different body shapes) so consistency in tone here will be like no other.

The strength of graphite means this guitar will survive travel and changes in the environment, while the stability of graphite means a guitar that will stay in tune no matter what the environment throws at it. The all-graphite soundboard will not belly, sink, or crack and the all-graphite neck will not warp with changes in climate. It's also light in weight, meaning it's comfortable to cradle or stand with – and, crucially, to travel with. Interestingly, the back of the guitar has a rounded edge where we'd usually find the binding; it's kind of like a beveled edge and it adds to the comfort. The whole guitar is finished in a thin clear lacquer developed by the company to protect it from UV rays. There's a kind of shimmering three-dimensional beauty in the graphite's weave. RainSong has developed the best possible finish for protection and appearance without dampening sound. A carefully bookmatched back of graphite weave, perfectly inlaid custom shark fret-markers and logo gives the guitar a striking and refined look.



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Next up on RainSong's innovation checklist is the way they create the necks of the guitars. Straight away, the neck here is flawlessly playable, thin, and feels just right. How, you ask? Well, RainSong developed a process called Performance Shape-Casting. This allows necks and fretboards to be cast simultaneously as a single graphite matrix and as a result, tolerances can be maintained with RainSong necks that are unheard of with more conventional neck shaping methods. The intonation is superb, and no matter how hard we tried to find them, dead spots up and down the neck were non-existent. The action on this test guitar is pretty low and there's no fret-buzz anywhere – the low action, coupled with the slim neck make this RainSong an effortless joy to play.

I'm told that RainSong uses the same technology in bonding its bridges and necks that is used in making planes, rockets, and satellite equipment. It's apparently stronger than the bonds of any wood glue or off-the-shelf epoxy and will combine for a smoother passage of energy from string to soundboard, for greater detail, a broader dynamic range, and cleaner tone. My guess is that the combination of all of RainSong's innovations in this guitar contributes to the sound it produces. That evenness and balance of tone is what hits you square in the face when first hearing this



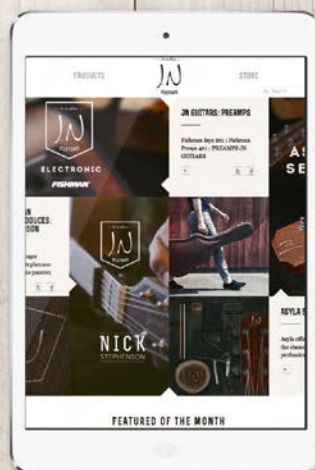
The benefits of having this guitar far outweigh the idea of it being a bit different. RainSong's excellent sustain and great clarity lead to a charm of its own, and given the chance, it'll charm you just as it has me.

guitar. Simply running up and down a scale yields superior clarity; from string to string, every note was balanced in volume and crystal clear. Its low end is huge – the volume really coming out to play when you grab a pick and strum a few open chords. The big bass response prompted me to drop this down to an open tuning and the clarity and depth of the tonal spectrum was just as strong as in standard.

The Fishman Prefix Plus-T ably takes this guitar from travel to stage. That unique carbon sound is amplified into a bloom of harmonics and tone simply by plugging in and not paying too much attention to the Fishman's Prefix Plus-T features of volume, bass, treble, and semi-parametric contour controls – again, it's just effortless, and I got the sound I wanted with very little tweaking. In addition to a built-in chromatic tuner, the guitar's Prefix Plus-T adds a brilliance control and a phase switch and notch filter to help fight feedback on stage.

RainSong claims that this guitar "is the ultimate combination of workhorse and racehorse for the professional musician" and I can see why they'd think that. You've got that unique pure carbon tone, it's impervious to climate changes, has an innovative Performance Shape Casting neck, high tech bonding, great plugged in tone – and it'll certainly turn a few heads at the open mic night. The only gripe is that it is a graphite guitar and if you're a traditionalist, you wouldn't be seen dead with one of these. That aside, though, the benefits of having this guitar far outweigh the idea of it being a bit different. RainSong's excellent sustain and great clarity lead to a charm of its own, and given the chance, it'll charm you just as it has me. It's a tremendously versatile guitar that I wouldn't hesitate to use on stage or in the studio.

Guy Little




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TAYLOR 414CE



As a professional musician, you need a reliable, dependable, excellent piece of kit at your side that will do the job, every time, wherever you are – and this is that guitar.

Is the Taylor 414ce the perfect example of what makes Taylor great? **Sam Wise** finds out.

Taylor has acquired a worldwide reputation for quality to rival that of many manufacturers in double quick time – and they haven't done it with wild and wacky designs, but through reliably excellent guitars that make both evolutionary and revolutionary steps forward. The 414ce is an excellent example of this: a guitar which does everything well.

BUILD QUALITY

The 414ce's body is Taylor's signature Grand Auditorium shape; bigger than a Grand Concert, but smaller than a dreadnought; it's the shape that Taylor made its name with, intended to provide the high end sparkle of a smaller body with enough bass punch to make it more of an all purpose guitar than either the larger or smaller bodies. In this case, it features a Venetian cutaway, again a feature that's been very popular with players, reinforcing their commitment to producing a guitar that will do its job well. The top is solid Sitka spruce; a good, tight grained piece with some really attractive cross silking that catches wonderfully as you move it through the light. The back and sides are ovankol, a relative of rosewood but with a slightly lighter, less direct tonal profile which may in fact have more in common with koa than rosewood. Visually, it's a stunning honey-mustard brown, attractively striped and again with silking which is picked out nicely by the finish. Back and sides are bound in simple white plastic, with black and white striped purfling, and Taylor's typical pickguard,



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TAYLOR 414CE**NEED TO KNOW****Manufacturer:** Taylor**Model:** 414ce**Retail Price:** £2,130**Body Size:** Grand Auditorium**Made In:** USA**Top:** Solid Sitka spruce**Back and Sides:** Ovangkol**Neck:** Mahogany**Fingerboard:** Ebony**Frets:** 20**Tuners:** Chrome-plated Taylor**Nut Width:** 1 3/4"**Scale Length:** 25 1/2"**Onboard Electronics:** Taylor Expression System 2**Strings Fitted:** Elixir**Gig Bag/Case Included:** Taylor hardshell case**ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS****Pros:** Fabulous build quality, lovely breezy tone, good pickup system**Cons:** Not the strongest character**Overall:** A fantastic tool rather than a big personality**ACOUSTIC RATING****Sound Quality:** ★★★★★**Build Quality:** ★★★★★**Value for Money:** ★★★★★**CONTACT DETAILS:****Taylor Guitars**www.taylorguitars.com

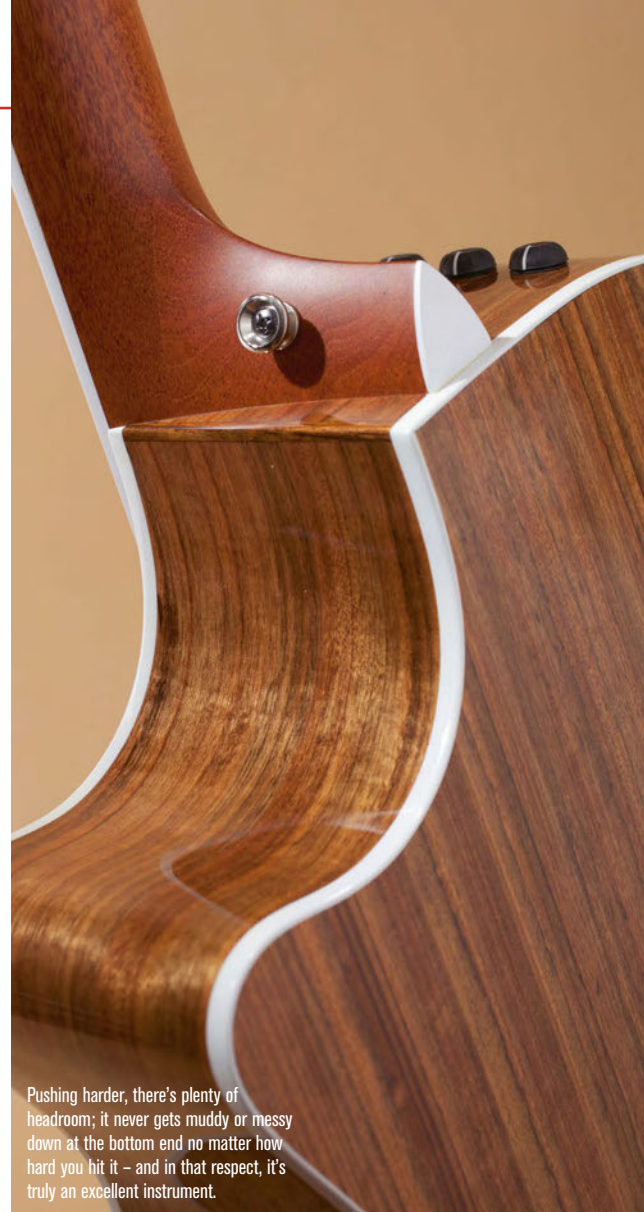
the lower edge of which echoes the shape of the body's edge.

The tropical mahogany neck has an ebony fingerboard, again bound in white, matched by an ebony bridge with ebony pins, a Tusq nut at one end of the strings and a Micarta saddle at the other.

Taylor's own nickel tuners grace the headstock and are, as you'd expect on a guitar of this price, smooth and reliable in operation. It's fitted with Taylor's Expression System 2 pickup, which places the piezo crystals behind, rather than under, the saddle which Taylor claims captures a truer picture of the saddle's movement than the conventional positioning.

Construction-wise, it is all you would expect from a Taylor; everything is executed to perfection, not the slightest hint of clumsily executed binding, of glue squeeze out, of a rough fret end. Overall, this is a handsome, but relatively subtle and unadorned guitar. Taylor can give you exotic woods and mountains of abalone if that's what you want, but this is a straightforward player's guitar, intended to give you a really top class instrument at a relatively affordable price. If you want a guitar to put in the back of your van every night, drag it

into a different pub and play its heart out, rather than to display on a stand next to your baby grand, this is a sensible choice.



Pushing harder, there's plenty of headroom; it never gets muddy or messy down at the bottom end no matter how hard you hit it – and in that respect, it's truly an excellent instrument.

SOUNDS & PLAYABILITY

The Taylor is a friendly guitar to sit and play, tucking into your body much more easily than larger bodies do, with a C profile neck that's slim enough not to be bulky, but still with enough material in it to fill your palm nicely. Even better, it truly delivers on Taylor's promise of an all-rounder tone, which may be either a blessing or a curse. Sitka spruce, that stalwart of so many acoustics, has a naturally crisp, bright tone which mellows over time, and should pair well with the ovangkol, if that wood answers Taylor's "tonally close to koa" claim. It is indeed very close to our expectations of a spruce/koa combination; played with a gentle fingerstyle, there's a soft edge to the brightness. It's not as forward as spruce and rosewood, and perhaps has a little extra sparkle to the top end. As you start to dig in a little, strumming, the slight softness is notable in the lower midrange and the bass too; it's not at all to the detriment of the tone, rather it just lends it a little lightness that might not be there with either rosewood or the darker sounding mahogany. Pushing harder, there's plenty of headroom; it never gets muddy or messy down at the bottom end no matter how hard you hit it – and in that respect, it's truly an excellent instrument. Plug it in, and the pickup system also delivers to expectations with a perfect representation of the acoustic tone.



6 String Acoustics



13028 - Atkin 'The Forty Three' J45
13027 - Atkin AA Deluxe Custom OOO Walnut
14431 - Atkin OM Custom Acoustic, Secondhand
13022 - Atkin OO Am Special Parlour Guitar
13578 - BSG J10F Jumbo Electro Acoustic, Used
14197 - Breedlove Discovery Concert Left-handed
13367 - Brook Lyn 12 Fret Handmade Guitar
13189 - Brook Tamar Medium Jumbo Handmade
13188 - Brook Taw OM Size Handmade Guitar
13366 - Brook Teign Dreadnought Handmade Guitar
13906 - Cort AD8100P AD Series Acoustic Guitar
13909 - Cort AD840 CP OP Electro Acoustic
13917 - Cort Earth 100R Natural Acoustic Guitar
4612 - Dave King Katrina OOO Model, Sunburst
4613 - Dave King Louise, Co. Parlour, Natural
4770 - EKO Ranger Vintage Acoustic, Natural
13544 - Eko Oliveira Pignoli Ltd Edition Acoustic
13847 - Eko Ranger 6 VR Fastlok, Vint. SB Gloss
13850 - Eko TRI 018 Honey Burst
13851 - Eko TRI 018 Natural
13552 - Eko Vintage Ranger 6 in Black, Reissue
14246 - Faith Jupiter Jumbo, Secondhand
6975 - Fender CD60, Black
5096 - Fender CD60, Natural
5079 - Fender CD60, Sunburst
10245 - Fender CD60 Acoustic Guitar, Mahogany
14304 - Fender Starcaster Acoustic Guitar Pack
6142 - Gibson Hummingbird in Sunburst
13213 - Gibson J185 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand
0000 - K Yairi - 2 Models in Stock Now
7970 - LAG T3000 Dreadnought, Satin Finish
12652 - Lakewood D14 Dreadnought Acoustic
9184 - Lakewood D18 Dreadnought, Natural
12649 - Lakewood M14 Grand Concert
12655 - Lakewood M18 Grand Concert Acoustic
13386 - Landola D85 Dreadnought Acoustic, Used
8308 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Black
8310 - Levin SW203 Acoustic Guitar in Natural
14127 - Luna Vista Mustang Electro Acoustic
5702 - Martin D28 Dreadnought, Natural
7115 - Martin LX1 Little Martin
6010 - Martin 00028EC Eric Clapton, Natural
13581 - Martin SWOMGT Orchestra Shape, Used
9342 - Northwood M80 12
11149 - Seagull Excursion Natural Folk SG
11148 - Seagull Excursion Natural Grand SG
11162 - Seagull Maritime SWS Mahogany High-Gloss
10230 - Seagull S6 Original
14259 - Takamine GD93S Acoustic Guitar, Natural
13291 - Tanglewood TPEFLS
9587 - Tanglewood TSJ XPM Super Jumbo
14061 - Tanglewood TW130 SM Orchestra Shape
9570 - Tanglewood TW40 DAN Dreadnought
14110 - Taylor 110 Acoustic Guitar, Secondhand
0000 - Vintage - 8 Models in Stock Now
8304 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic, Sunburst
10932 - Westcoast SW201 Acoustic Redburst
12437 - Yairi FY84 OM Folk Acoustic Guitar
12428 - Yairi P65 Small Parlour Guitar
5632 - Yamaha F310 Dreadnought, Natural
14426 - Yamaha F310 Dreadnought Tobacco Stburst
14425 - Yamaha F370DW Acoustic Guitar, Natural
13691 - Yamaha FG411C, Vintage Sunburst, Used
9182 - Yamaha FG700MS Acoustic Guitar, Natural
6964 - Yamaha FG700S Acoustic Guitar
13387 - Yamaha FG720S Yamaha FG720S
14424 - Yamaha FG720S Oriental Blue Burst
13308 - Yamaha FG720S Dreadnought Sunburst
5592 - Yamaha FG720S Dreadnought, Natural
8019 - YAMAHA FG730S Electro Acoustic Guitar
9181 - Yamaha FS720S Acoustic, Natural

6 String Electro Acoustics



14343 - Alvarez ABT60E Baritone Guitar
14199 - Breedlove Discovery Concert CE, Natural
10978 - Breedlove Passport C250CME Electro, Nat
10294 - Breedlove Retro DFER with LR Baggs
10918 - Breedlove USA Gold D/SRE
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
13969 - Chord Salamander Electro Acoustic Guitar
13908 - Cort MRE NS Electro Acoustic, Natural Satin
13920 - Cort SFX FM TBK, Trans Black
14222 - Crafter GA6E Electro Acoustic, Natural
4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black
13852 - Eko TRI 018 CW EQ Honey Burst
12358 - Faith FKV Venus Concert Cutaway/Electro
12360 - Fender Avul Lavigne Newporter
6943 - Fender CD60CE, Electro, Black
6943 - Fender CD60CE Dreadnought Elec, Sunburst
10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany Electro Acoustic
12671 - Fender Tony Alva Sonoran SCE
14344 - Freshman FA350DCE Electro Acoustic
10150 - Gibson J35 Electro Acoustic Guitar, Nat
13169 - Gibson LC1 Cascade, V. Sunburst, Used
14336 - Ibanez SGE130 Jumbo Electro, Used

6 String Electro Acoustics



9243 - James Neilgan Electro Acoustic, Used
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF003 Electro, Pau Ferro B&S
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
9552 - LAG T300AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
9186 - Lakewood D14CP Electro Acoustic, Natural
12674 - Lakewood J14 Baritone Jumbo Electro
12672 - Lakewood J14CP Jumbo Electro
12658 - Lakewood M14 CP
12678 - Lakewood M18CP Grand Concert Electro
12679 - Lakewood Sungha Jung Signature Electro
14129 - Luna Hearsong Series Parlor Electro
14130 - Luna Henna Oasis Steel String Electro
14128 - Luna Vista Wolf Electro Acoustic Guitar
13717 - Maestro Raffles AB-CSB-A Guitar
13714 - Maestro Raffles FM-CSB-A Custom Jumbo
12696 - Maestro Raffles Flame Maple Cust Electro
12702 - Maestro Raffles IR-CSB R Small Jumbo
12790 - Maestro Raffles MDT Small Jumbo Electro
12789 - Maestro Raffles Monkey Pod Electro
13713 - Maestro Raffles MR-CSB-A Custom Jumbo
12701 - Maestro Rosetta IR Dreadnought Electro
12792 - Maestro Rosetta MDT Dreadnought Electro
12596 - Maestro Rosetta with fitted LR Baggs
12793 - Maestro Rosetta MRDT Dreadnought Electro
12791 - Maestro Rosetta SR Dreadnought Electro
13212 - Maestro Singa Flame Maple Custom Electro
12594 - Maestro Singa Handmade Electro Acoustic
12699 - Maestro Singa K-CSB-K Koa Jumbo Electro
13712 - Maestro Singa MR-CSB-A Custom Jumbo
13209 - Maestro Singa MRDT Medium Jumbo Electro
13711 - Maestro Singa O-CSB Custom Jumbo
13718 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13715 - Maestro Victoria IR OOO with LR Baggs
13207 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13208 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
13055 - Maestro Victoria with fitted LR Baggs
12783 - Maestro Victoria MR OOO with LR Baggs
13653 - Martin & Co 000X1AE Electro, Used
13856 - Martin Ed Sheeran X Signature Ed Electro
14214 - Martin OMC1E Electro Acoustic Guitar
13674 - Martin OMXAE Electro Acoustic, Black
12439 - Northwood Custom Koa 80D Electro
12438 - Northwood Custom Myrtle 80 Series Dthought
4400 - Northwood P80, 000V Electro, Natural
6403 - Northwood R80, OM Electro, Natural
12472 - Ovalton 6868 Elite Standard Secondhand
14247 - Ovalton CC267 Electro Acoustic, Used
14169 - PRS SE Alex Lifeson Signature
10095 - RainSong BLJM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - RainSong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10038 - RainSong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
9820 - RainSong CO-DR1000N2
9821 - RainSong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - RainSong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - RainSong CO-WS1000N2
9814 - RainSong DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10097 - RainSong H-DR1000N2
10100 - RainSong H-OM1000N2
10098 - RainSong H-WS1000N2
9815 - RainSong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
10091 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Green
10093 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Red
9824 - RainSong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Studio
9823 - RainSong S-OM1000N2 OM Studio Electro
9822 - RainSong S-WS1000N2 WS Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
7974 - RainSong WS1000 Graphite Guitar
5257 - Satori YD18EQ Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic, Vint Nat
5255 - Satori YD28EQ, OM Electro, Natural
14251 - Takamine EF508KC NEX Cutaway Electro
14262 - Takamine GD11MCE NS
14253 - Takamine GD30CE Electro Acoustic, Nat
14257 - Takamine GF30CE Brown Sunburst
14252 - Takamine GN15CE Electro Acoustic, Nat
14258 - Takamine GN51CE Electro Acoustic, Nat
14264 - Takamine GX11MCE NS
14261 - Takamine GY93E New Yorker Electro
14249 - Takamine P1DC Electro Acoustic Guitar
14250 - Takamine P3DC Electro Acoustic Guitar
13295 - Tanglewood TPESFCEZS Electro Acoustic
14063 - Tanglewood TSF CE N SS
13462 - Tanglewood TVC XB
13459 - Tanglewood TW115 SSCE
13458 - Tanglewood TW130 SMCE Electro Acoustic
4188 - Tanglewood TW40 DANE Dreadnought
4187 - Tanglewood TW40 OANE Orchestra
8330 - Tanglewood TW40SD VSE in Vintage Stburst
9202 - Tanglewood TW45 W OPE Acoustic Guitar
12304 - Tanglewood TW73 VSE
13288 - Tanglewood TWUPE Parlour Electro
13485 - Taylor F15S Electro Acoustic, Used
14078 - Taylor 912C Acoustic Guitar Used
14419 - Vintage Pilgrim VPG900 Mayflower Deluxe
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
13399 - Vintage VECJ100 Jumbo Acoustic Black
14108 - Washburn D28 SN Acoustic Guitar c.1989
0000 - Westcoast - 3 Models in Stock now
0000 - Yamaha - 25 Models in Stock Now

Classical Guitars



13835 - Admira 1000 Classical, No EQ Used
13026 - Admira Concerto Classical Guitar
8590 - Azahar Model 31A Classical Guitar
6031 - Azahar Model 40B Classical Guitar
13857 - Joan Cashimira 3A Concert, Used
8584 - Mendieta Conservatoire A Classical
8507 - Mendieta Conservatoire C Classical
6777 - Mendieta Estudio S Classical
8240 - Mendieta Estudio T Classical Guitar
12238 - Mendieta Estudio VCE Electro
6029 - Ramirez 1NE Classical Guitar
6335 - Ramirez 2E Classical Guitar
6028 - Ramirez 4E Classical Guitar
5251 - Ramirez AE Classical Guitar
5644 - Ramirez George Harrison Model Classical
6337 - Ramirez R1 Classical Guitar
6336 - Ramirez R2 Classical Guitar
8357 - Ramirez R4 Classical Guitar
6027 - Ramirez S1 Classical Guitar
12761 - Ramirez SP Classical Guitar
6442 - Roberto C1 Classical Guitar With Bag
6441 - Roberto C2 Classical Guitar
12302 - Tanglewood TCMR1 Classical Guitar
10999 - Westcoast Student 4/4 Classical, Red

12 Strings



13865 - Breedlove Pursuit 12 String Acoustic
13907 - Cort Earth 7012ENS Electro 12-String
12227 - Eko 12 String Guitar, Secondhand
13553 - Eko Vintage Ranger 12 in Black, Reissue
9553 - Lag T200D12 12 String Acoustic Guitar
9816 - RainSong JM3000 Classic Series Electro
9817 - RainSong WS3000 Classic Series Electro
14256 - Takamine GD30CE 12 String, Black
13475 - Tanglewood TW145 12 SS CE
14398 - Vintage VE2000GG12 Giltrap
14349 - Vintage VE8000PB12 Paul Brett, Used
14350 - Vintage VE8000PB12 Paul Brett, Used
12706 - Washburn D42S 12 12 String Guitar

Mandolin Family



8826 - Ashbury AM-325 Octave Mandola
8824 - Ashbury AM-370 Mandolin
13527 - Blue Moon BB15 Bouzouki GR33001
14198 - Breedlove Crossover Mandolin OO VS, Bk
14028 - Breedlove Crossover OO O Hole Mandolin,
12568 - Fender FM63S Acoustic Mandolin, Sunburst
12540 - Fender FM63SE Electro Acoustic Mandolin
4551 - Jimmy Moon A Plus E Electro, Natural
9240 - Jimmy Moon A2 Acoustic Mandolin, Natural
4554 - Jimmy Moon A Plus Electro Bouzouki, Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Octave Mandolin (Mandola) Nat
4553 - Jimmy Moon Standard Mandolin
9430 - Ozark Flat Back Bouzouki
7221 - Savannah SA115 Electro Mandolin, Used
8315 - Westcoast M20 Mandolin Sunburst
12347 - Westcoast M20S Mandolin Sunburst
8316 - Westcoast M50E Electro Mandolin

Travel Guitars



13550 - Eko Evo Mini EQ Travel Guitar
13848 - Eko Tri Mini Honey Burst 3/4 Acoustic
13849 - Eko Tri Mini Natural 3/4 Acoustic
14444 - James Neilgan LYN-A MINI FI Lyn, Used
0000 - Martin - 6 Models in Stock Now
14264 - Takamine GX11ME NS
9588 - Tanglewood TW15 Baby All Solid Travel
13271 - Vintage VTG100 Travel Guitar in Natural
13128 - Vintage VTR800PB Viator Travel Guitar
14437 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini, Dark Red Burst
14439 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini Electro Acoustic, Bk
14436 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini Electro Acoustic, Nat
14438 - Yamaha APXT2 Mini, Old Violin Sunburst

Ukuleles



12564 - Barnes & Mullins BJ306 6-String Banjo
4371 - Barnes & Mullins UB11 Banjo Ukulele
0000 - Beano - 3 Models in Stock Now
8209 - Delta Blue Ukulele Banjo
13616 - Fender Philea Soprano Ukulele
13066 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Acacia
13067 - Iberica Soprano Special Ukulele, Walnut
12338 - Iuke Piccolo Standard Ukulele Inc GigBag
12800 - Kala KA-BN1BK-C Concert Banjo Ukulele
9345 - Kala U Bass Electro Ac In Solid Mahogany
8127 - Kala U Bass in Mahogany
4722 - Kala U Bass 2 Electro Acoustic Ukulele
12285 - Lag U100C Concert Ukulele
13978 - Laka Concert Ukulele with GigBag
13979 - Laka Soprano Ukulele with Case
0000 - Magic Fluke - 7 Models in Stock Now
5010 - Mahalo UTL1 Soprano Ukulele
0000 - Nukulele - 6 Models in Stock Now
8514 - Ohana BK10 Baritone Ukulele
8515 - Ohana BK20 Baritone Ukulele
12610 - Ohana BK22 Baritone Ukulele
12609 - Ohana BK33E Bass Ukulele
7102 - Ohana CK10S Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
13633 - Ohana CK15BK Concert Ukulele, Black
13634 - Ohana CK15BL Concert Ukulele, Blue
13635 - Ohana CK15GN Concert Ukulele, Green
13632 - Ohana CK15W Concert Ukulele, Garnet Red
12607 - Ohana CK15W Concert Ukulele
12605 - Ohana CK15Z Concert Ukulele
9050 - Ohana CK20CE Concert Uke
4466 - Ohana CK20S Concert Ukulele
13639 - Ohana CK22Z Concert Ukulele, Zebrawood
13643 - Ohana CK23 Concert Ukulele
8520 - Ohana CK35CE Electro Concert Ukulele
8519 - Ohana CK35GS Concert Ukulele in Mahogany
13622 - Ohana CK35L Concert Uke, Tenor Neck
12603 - Ohana CK38 Concert Ukulele
8513 - Ohana CK50MG Concert Ukulele
8512 - Ohana CK50WG Concert Ukulele
13627 - Ohana CK51SE Slimline Concert Ukulele
8508 - Ohana PK10S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
8516 - Ohana PK25S Soprano Ukulele Pineapple
13637 - Ohana SK10GN Soprano Uke, Matte Green
4712 - Ohana SK10S Soprano Ukulele
13636 - Ohana SK10YW Soprano Uke, Matte Yellow
13644 - Ohana SK12 Soprano Ukulele
4711 - Ohana SK20S Soprano Ukulele Uke
14210 - Ohana SK21M Premium Mahogany Sop.
13626 - Ohana SK22 Soprano Ukulele
8517 - Ohana SK22Z Sop Ukulele Zebrawood B&S
13642 - Ohana SK23 Soprano Ukulele
4710 - Ohana SK25 Soprano Ukulele
4715 - Ohana SK35G Solid Mahogany Gloss
9052 - Ohana SK38 Soprano Uke, Mahogany
14211 - Ohana SK70BA Spruce & Morinda Sop Uke
7108 - Ohana SK70MG Soprano Ukulele
14212 - Ohana SK70WG Soprano Uke, Willow B & S
7106 - Ohana SK75 Soprano Ukulele
7107 - Ohana SK75R Soprano Ukulele
12608 - Ohana SKS15E Slim Electro Soprano Uke
9528 - Ohana TK20CE Electro Acoustic Tenor Uke
14209 - Ohana TK22Z Spruce & Zebrawood Tenor
14208 - Ohana TK35-10 Tiple 10 String Tenor
12611 - Ohana TK38 Tenor Ukulele
12612 - Ohana TK51SE Tenor Ukulele
12390 - Ohana Soprano Uke Gig Bag
13311 - Ohana Concert Uke Gig Bag
13312 - Ohana Tenor Uke Gig Bag
13310 - Ohana Baritone Uke Gig Bag
5009 - Ozark Ukulele Bag
12242 - Recording King RU998 Resonator Ukulele
12750 - ResoVibe Weeki Wachee Resonator Ukulele
0000 - Risa - 2 Models in Stock Now
9639 - Staggs USX SPA Soprano Uke Spalted Maple
12189 - Uluru Koa III Tenor Ukulele
10424 - Uluru Lohua I Soprano Ukulele
10425 - Uluru I Concert Ukulele
10433 - Uluru Pukana IIA IIC Cutaway Concert Uke
13033 - Vox Ukuletric 33 Ukulele, Blackburst

Acoustic Amplification



0000 - AER - 12 Models in Stock Now
0000 - Acus One - 9 Models in Stock Now
13905 - Blackstar ID Core BEAM Bluetooth Amp
10496 - Fender Acoustasonic 15 Acoustic Amp
8166 - Fender Acoustasonic 150 Acoustic Combo
9166 - Loudbox Artist
4548 - Fishman Loudbox Mini - 60W, 1x6.5"
5286 - Fishman SA220 - 220W, 6x4"
9711 - Laney LA12C Acoustic Amp Combo
13282 - Markbass AC101 Acoustic Combo
6770 - Marshall AS1000 - 50W+50W, 2x8"
13956 - Marshall AS500 - 50W, 2x8"
6771 - Marshall AS500 - 50W, 2x8"
4573 - Peavey Ecoustic E20 - 20W, 1x8"
4572 - Peavey Ecoustic E208 - 20W, 2x8"
0000 - Roland - 7 Models in Stock Now
14371 - MOBILE AC Acoustic Chorus, Portable Amp
13018 - Tanglewood T3.30W Acoustic Amplifier
8108 - Tanglewood T6, 60W
13471 - Tanglewood TXS Bass Sub
10937 - Yamaha THRFA Acoustic Amp

CONCLUSION

This guitar's great strength could also be its achilles heel. It's a really great all-rounder, it does everything well, but it lacks a really unique character of its own. It's hard to imagine a gigging acoustic guitarist who couldn't pick up this instrument and have it do an excellent job; you could play solo fingerstyle on this, you could strum country tunes, you could provide the base layer in a rock band, you could play hymn tunes, and all of these things it would do well. What it didn't do, for us, was to shout out loud "this is what I'm for!" That's both a triumph, and a tripwire. As a creative musician, sometimes you need an instrument with a character as strong as yours, which thrusts itself into your consciousness and wrenches out something you never knew was there. This might not be that instrument. As a professional musician, however, you need a reliable, dependable, excellent piece of kit at your side that will do the job, every time, wherever you are – and this is that guitar.

Sam Wise

Construction-wise, it is just what you would expect from a Taylor – everything is executed to perfection.

This is a straightforward player's guitar, intended to give you a top class instrument at a relatively affordable price.

It's fitted with Taylor's Expression System 2 pickup, which places the piezo crystals behind, rather than under, the saddle which Taylor claim captures a truer picture of the saddle's movement than the conventional positioning.



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AUDEN COLTON 12-STRING



Alun Lower gets double the fun with this compelling and smartly designed 12-string from Auden...

Auden is a force on the rise. Since the last guitar I reviewed from the up-and-coming guitar maker, the company has opened some seriously impressive new manufacturing premises that Auden suggests may now make them the largest guitar manufacturing facility in the UK. Additionally, Auden has acquired Gordon Smith electric guitars and forged a new partnership with Montoya classical guitars, expanding the company's product catalogue considerably. In an industry where it's often our electrified cousins that enjoy the lion's share of the headiness, it's great news all round for acoustic players far and wide. After all, who doesn't enjoy having a few more quality choices available on their shopping list?

There's no denying that Auden's product range is fairly extensive, covering most niches and tastes that you could care to name. So after trying out baritones, parlours and all manner of other wonderful examples, it's fair to say I'm pretty excited about getting to grips with this 12-string Colton – or its full name, Colton Full Body Cedar 12-String.

BUILD QUALITY

Out of the box, the Colton is exactly what we've come to expect from Auden – quality tonewoods, classy finishing and smart, modern design. Supporting the lovely cedar top are back and sides constructed from solid rosewood, finished in a beautiful gloss to

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AUDEN COLTON 12-STRING

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Auden
Model: Colton 12-String
Retail Price: £1,499
Body Size: Dreadnought
Made In: China, set up in the UK
Top: Cedar
Back and Sides: Solid Indian rosewood
Neck: African mahogany
Fingerboard: Ebony
Frets: 20
Tuners: Schertler
Nut Width: 43mm
Scale Length: 650mm
Onboard Electronics: Schertler Lydia
Strings Fitted: High quality USA-made
Left Handers: N/A
Gig Bag/Case Included: Hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: Well-engineered, modern, and a classy looker paired with great tones is a winning combination; and a hardcase with the RRP!

Cons: Perhaps a more versatile pickup, but that's splitting hairs.

Overall: This is a great 12-string guitar from a brand with its own identity and voice – and one proud enough to sing from the rooftops with

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

Auden Guitars

www.audenguitars.com



really bring out the detail in the wood's grain. Rosewood is one of those tonewoods that can look absolutely spectacular or remarkably dull depending on how you finish it, and the Colton is definitely the former. The cedar top's reddish hue is a gorgeous too and serves as a charming complement to the rosewood rather than the crisp contrast of a spruce top. The multilayered binding and abalone rosette add further detailing to the top without distracting from the woods themselves, and a peek inside the body reveals the Auden logo burned into the binding.

In contrast to the body, the satin-finished mahogany neck is dovetailed neatly into place, and other than some minor finish build-up around the neck join, it is flawlessly implemented. The neck profile is comfy, full and well-rounded – a good all-rounder profile as many of Auden's other guitars have been in my experience – appealing well enough to both modern and traditional players. Having said that, as with most 12-strings there is a fair bit to wrap your hand around, and those with smaller grasps might find themselves struggling a little. As always with such things, this is

something you'll have to test out yourself to be completely sure.

Elsewhere, the finish and fit of the frets



The most pleasing thing from the Colton on first listen is the fine-tuned balance between the strings. From the lowest notes to the sharpest high notes, everything rings out in equal volume and with crystal clarity.

is as immaculate as I have come to expect from Auden, and the ebony fingerboard makes for a sublime playing experience.

As with other guitars in the Auden family, the Colton comes fitted with a Schertler Lydia pickup system – a solid, dependable unit that has become almost synonymous with the Auden brand, and is particularly well-known for its eminently giggable sound. Honestly, it's not the most advanced system on the planet but as an extra that doesn't detract from the guitar's acoustic performance and overall appearance, it certainly fits the bill.

SOUND QUALITY

I'm sure many of you out there will share the same opinion as me in that when trying out a guitar for the first time, there's usually plenty of fun to be had in simply tapping the body at various points to check its reverberations and acoustic response. Just as you'd hope from a good quality all-solid acoustic there is indeed plenty to enjoy here – every knock ringing out a slightly different character and coaxing the strings into a lovely light hum, rich with harmonic overtones and shimmering 12-string tonality.

Performing that first strum is a wonderful moment on 12-string guitars too, and the most pleasing thing from the Colton on first listen is the fine-tuned balance between the strings. From the lowest notes to the sharpest high notes, everything rings out in equal volume and with crystal clarity. The Colton's body shape is Auden's take on a dreadnaught and as

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such provides all the necessary low end cloud one could desire, with a healthy smattering of mid-range to fill in the gaps. There's plenty of volume on-tap too, making the Colton potentially quite an overpowering instrument depending on which other instruments you might be playing along with. It's big, bold and just loves the sound of its own voice!

There's no danger of getting lost in the mix with this guitar, and that massive tone is bound to turn heads in any room. Spacious, enveloping and multi-textured, this 12-string's tone is something to be admired. If you plan to try this in the shops and adore the way it looks, I'd be surprised if it takes you more than 60 seconds of play to make your decision.

I'll admit to having some concerns about how the Lydia would handle a 12-string, as normally I find the system to be solid but not spectacular and haven't had the opportunity to try one in this undoubtedly more challenging format. However, as soon as I plugged in I breathed a sigh of relief as I enjoyed a balanced, even sound that suits itself especially well to live performance. Through a gig and some effects pedals, the Lydia is an ideal partner, keeping everything crisp and defined even if the core tone isn't the most natural or accurate reproduction. If you're after top-drawer amplified or recorded tones then you want to consider picking up a good microphone – but then you may well have thought of that already anyway!



What the Colton offers is an incredibly refined and well-engineered experience from just about every angle. It looks and plays superbly, sounds wonderful and stands out with its own distinct identity.



The Colton is exactly what we've come to expect from Auden – quality tonewoods, classy finishing and smart, modern design.

CONCLUSION

The Colton 12-string is another winner from Auden. How could it not be? As I mentioned earlier in the review, production is clearly a big factor in Auden's success, and the sheer consistency of the instruments I've reviewed so far is testament to that. While we're generally spoiled in the modern guitar industry, I've come across my fair share of build quality issues in my time and so this kind of quality in a relatively new company really is impressive – and I hope everyone at Auden takes great pride in that.

What the Colton offers is perhaps not the most sophisticated plugged-in performance, but instead an incredibly refined and well-engineered experience from just about every other angle. It looks and plays superbly, sounds wonderful and stands out with its own distinct identity, somehow never coming across as another "copycat" brand. This guitar feels like it was made and designed with love and attention, and as a guitarist there's very little I find more compelling than that. If you haven't already, go out and try an Auden today, whether it's a 12-string, baritone or a regular ol' six-string. You won't regret it.

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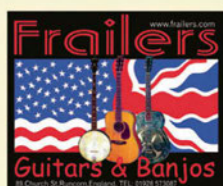
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Ashbury have developed many new lines at their luthiery workshop in Viet Nam. These hand crafted instruments have been brought to life by concert guitarist and factory manager John Jiang in consultation with Ashbury's British designers.

Phil Davidson is a well established and highly experienced luthier, Ashbury's Pete McClelland and Chris Rudd are also involved in the design process.

All three are experienced mandolinists and frets players.

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AVIAN DOVE



This is very much a "what's not to like" little instrument; tremendous value and great fun to play. It comprises some of the best features of the modern with the familiar security of classic tradition.



It kicks out a surprisingly quick and loud response even to the most polite encouragement, with or without a pick. There's a distinct, perky brightness from the off...

The mighty Avian parlour gets a pickup and a bevel – **Stephen Bennett** checks out the latest Michael Bashkin designed Dove.

Avian guitars have been causing something of a stir of late, thanks not least to the Folk-Night-at-The-Jetsons' vibe of the big, blousy Skylark; a Marmite-to-the-max model that's even more endearingly mad-looking in the fan-fretted version.

This 12 fret to the neck, Dove parlour (the latest addition to the range) is a far more conservative option that proves the Michael Bashkin/Harry Fleishman-led operation is equally capable of delivering remarkable, affordable quality at the understated as well as the radical end of the design spectrum.

The two US innovators insist on the most exacting standards from their Chinese, "on the bench" manufacturers and Bashkin's a regular visitor to the factory on quality control missions from his Colorado base. Factory-based fears are quickly dispelled on first encountering an Avian, however, as the potential buyer can't help but wonder..."how the hell do this manage all this for the money?"

Indeed. The obvious answer is, "don't ask". Just buy one before they go up.

Any speculation on the qualities (or lack thereof) of specific instruments should, up to a point, take into account their place in the market. What's the comparison? What's the competition in terms of bang for this particular buck? One argument might be that often in the around-a-grand, electro-acoustic world, the customer's getting a four hundred quid guitar with six hundred quid's-worth of electrics.

This feel like a thousand quid guitar and, as such, the more than adequate B-Band gubbins on the inside

constitutes a significant bonus, to say the least.

The Dove boasts all solid woods; Sitka spruce top, Indian Rosewood back and sides, mahogany neck and in the one elegant nod towards acoustic bling, features a Kevin Ryan-style bevel that makes it as comfortable to hold as to behold. The "interrupted" rosewood rosette is a typical Bashkin touch, complimented by the neat downward slice where the fingerboard joins the soundhole. There's also a sense of calculated "modern luthiery meets tradition" in the classically old-school pyramid, ebony bridge topped off with its bone-saddle (the nut, too, is bone). One clear concession to price-control is the Gotoh-style tuners; Avian's own brand but not so far off the originals as to warrant a quibble. Then there's that dual source B-Band A 2.2 pickup system – more of which, anon.

The Dove looks like a bit of a smoothie; dapper but restrained, clean-limbed, small but (yes) perfectly formed. There's clearly been a lot of attention directed towards detail and quality of finish here. But how does it feel?

The bevel is a lovely touch. Even on a guitar of this size, the comfort of simply holding on to the thing is increased considerably. This is the perfect guitar for sitting on the couch, absently noodling with while your partner, who'll never understand anyway, is trying to watch the X-Factor. Something nice to hug after the blazing row, perhaps, and fortunately, the neck greets the player with the reassuring handshake of an old friend – so naturally familiar you won't even think about it.



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AVIAN DOVE

NEED TO KNOW

Manufacturer: Avian

Model: Dove

Retail Price: £1,149

Body Size: Parlour

Made In: Far East

Top: Sitka spruce

Back and Sides: Rosewood

Neck: Mahogany

Fingerboard: Ebony

Frets: 18

Tuners: Avian

Nut Width: 1.75"

Scale Length: 629mm

Onboard Electronics:

B-Band A 2.2

Strings Fitted: Elixir

.012 - .053

Left Handers: Yes, no extra cost

Gig Bag/Case Included:

Hard case

ACOUSTIC TEST RESULTS

Pros: A very capable tonal range that would suit a number of styles

Cons: Not much to report here

Overall: A guitar with unexpected depths – great sounding, stage ready with a lot to say for itself

ACOUSTIC RATING

Sound Quality: ★★★★★

Build Quality: ★★★★★

Value for Money: ★★★★★

CONTACT DETAILS:

The North American Guitar

www.thenorthamericanguitar.com

And the sound? Not huge in the bass, but then not many parlour instruments are – even at three times the price. Nevertheless, it kicks out a surprisingly quick and loud response even to the most polite encouragement, with or without a pick. There's a distinct, perky brightness from the off but it only takes a bit of gentle persuasion to coax out a pleasing warmth and "fatness" in the trebles. It keeps its focus

when tuned down to DADGAD, too – another bonus as many small-bodied, short-scale guitars start to get a bit fuzzy round the edges with the strings that loose. Fingerstyle, in true parlour-appropriate fashion, seems like the Dove's natural fit and while this would make a fine singer-songwriter's stage all-rounder, the overall brightness would lend itself perfectly to the propulsive, crystal-clear separation demands of gypsy jazz without the harsher, metallic edge of some bigger, purpose-built Manouche-machines. The Dove offers something a bit more cuddly. But, before slumping back onto that couch, what about those electrics?

The idea, embraced by both builder and dealer, is for each new Avian guitar to be gig-worthy straight out of the box. Hence the amplification system is both simple to get your head round and offers a wide and versatile tonal range even through the most basic or generic room/amp set-up. Packing more than just the standard, single under-saddle transducer, this hybrid system (the "XOM" or "cross-over mix" with EQ) catches the instrument's tone far more naturally and cleanly. The simple volume plus blend function (two discrete little wheel controls in the

The Dove looks like a bit of a smoothie; dapper but restrained, clean-lined, small but (yes) perfectly formed. There's clearly been a lot of attention directed towards detail and quality of finish here.

soundhole) offers a surprisingly wide-ranging, sonic twiddle-ability between both under-saddle and soundboard-mounted transducers that will combine to produce something tonally akin to a K&K – plenty of sparkle and air but not too brassy. One advantage of this approach is that the body and rim aren't as live, thus ironing out any unwanted "body contact" noises going through the PA and allowing more room for percussive playing, should one so wish. Either way, all that suggests the added potential for life as a studio or straight-into-the-computer recording guitar.

In all, this is very much a "what's not to like" little instrument; tremendous value and great fun to play. It comprises some of the best features of the modern with the familiar security of classic tradition so whether you're seeking that acoustic-jazz, sun-lit, Brazilian sway, floating off into new age fingerstyle reverie or just blues-bound for the Dustbowl, the Dove could be the ideal companion.

Stephen Bennett



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AW4000 featuring Solid Caucasian Spruce top

AW4000

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- Thinner neck profile

Artwood

While testing many different materials in order to find a new sound for the Artwood guitar line, we came across a rare type of spruce that originates from the Caucasus Mountains. The combination of a Caucasian Spruce top and Mahogany back/sides helps emphasize a rich tone in the low-mid frequency range, helping the instrument cut through while strumming. It also offers a crisp and bluesy sound when finger-picking.

The AW4000 features a traditional look with a classic finish, tortoiseshell binding, open-gear tuners and a maple dot inlay, but also features a thinner neck profile to accommodate the modern player as well. This guitar will be an extension of your own voice. Play one yourself to hear it sing.

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SALLY BARKER

STYLE... (VARIOUS)

The Poozies were put together by myself, Mary Macmaster and Patsy Seddon, after Mary and Patsy had guested on my second solo album. The idea was to have a band comprised of excellent musicians who also happened to be women. The current lineup of myself, Mary, Eilidh Shaw and Mairead Green have been together since April 2012. Our brief is to reflect our eclectic tastes – from traditional, Celtic, pop, rock and soul to avant-garde – and to entertain. I'm the main songwriter, and acoustic guitar is my main composing tool. I always record with my Washburn Festival Series acoustic, one of the original Woodstock mahoganies. I also used it as my main guitar for gigs until 2013 when it fell over and the neck broke off. Although I got it repaired, I'm nervous about using it live – I think that was a sign it's now too fragile. For live work, I'm currently using a LX1 Little Martin mahogany acoustic with a Headway SA2 pickup. Originally, I liked it because it was easier to carry around – I'm based in Leicestershire and The Poozies rehearse in Edinburgh – but now I also like the way it looks and sounds. Onstage, I go through two TC Electronic compact pedals (the tuner and HOF reverb) and an MXR M108 10-band graphic EQ, then DI straight to the PA. I also have a Yamaha APX7 and a Fender Montara (the one with the electric headstock). *Into The Well* is the first album by the current Poozies' lineup. We did our initial recording in October 2013, but didn't finish it until autumn 2014 because I was in the BBC TV programme 'The Voice'. My favourite track is 'Polkas'. It starts with a sweet tune of Mairead's called 'Memoirs Of A Geezer', goes into 'Annie's Tae' by Niall Vallely, and ends in frantic fashion with Liz Carroll's 'Bike To Ballyhahill'. I love a polka! Current work? An EP to support my solo UK tour this autumn.

www.poozies.co.uk



EMILY PORTMAN

STYLE... (FOLK/POP)

I'm a singer-songwriter from Glastonbury, now living in Liverpool. A few years ago, I was lent a banjo to try out. I had no idea what I was doing, but I enjoyed finding my way around it and a couple of songs came out of these initial experimentations. I draw a lot of my inspiration from folktales and ballads, mostly making up songs with the piano or by "singing to the air", but the banjo suggests different tunes and structures. My latest album *Coracle* is about motherhood and death, themes that have emerged since the birth of my daughter and a family bereavement. A coracle is a little round boat made of skins and willow. In some prehistoric burial sites, people have been found buried under their coracles. They also remind me of nests or babies' cribs, so it felt like a fitting title for an album about birth and death. The title track is about my daughter's spell in intensive care just after she was born. Recording it with an amazing bunch of string players in an octagonal church was a spine-tingling experience. Andy Bell, who produced the album, gathered a brilliant collection of guest musicians – Toby Kearney on drums, Sam Sweeney on violin and MG Boulter on guitars, plus Rachel Newton and Lucy Farrell my pals in The Emily Portman Trio – who really brought the songs to life. My Deering Classic Goodtime five-string is my first and only banjo. I like it because it's sweet-sounding and not too loud, which is important as we're a quiet band, playing quite a few acoustic gigs. I have had a Fishman DI fitted, at the recommendation of the brilliant banjo player Dan Walsh. I love the idea of having a handmade banjo at some stage. Future plans? Having launched with some UK gigs, I'm about to go back into the studio to record a new album of traditional songs with The Furrow Collective, which will be out in the autumn.

www.emilyportman.co.uk



DAN TUCKER

STYLE... (CONTEMPORARY FOLK)

Tinderbox is based in Bournemouth and features my wife Monique Houraghan on vocals, myself on guitar and Bob Burke on guitar, bass and harmony vocals. Our music is best described as folk with a contemporary feel. Subjects in our songs include relationships, war and politics. Some are travelling stories – several were written on the road. Our fifth album *Live at the Cottage*, which came out last year, was recorded in Debenham, Suffolk. The gig was organised by a fellow musician and friend, David Booth of Wet Feet Records, who asked if he could record it. It was a fantastic show, and the recording really captured that. It's had some amazing reviews and we're really pleased with it. 'Consequence' [which featured on an *Acoustic Presents...* CD] is about global warming. The lyrics were written in July 2010 when flooding caused mayhem in the UK. Monique writes all our lyrics and sometimes the music as well. When we write together, though, I usually compose a full guitar arrangement first and Monique uses that as a foundation for the song. I've collected a number of great guitars over the years including a Martin 000-16GT, a Taylor 714ce spring limited edition, a custom-made David Oddy and a K Yairi parlour shape. The guitar I gig most is a natural finish Ibanez Artwood AG600CE NT cutaway with a Fishman AEQ-3V pickup system. It has the most wonderful tone when plugged in – the sound is so good, in fact, that I've never used any peripheral effects pedals/EQ equipment with it. We are currently writing for our next studio album and preparing for a German tour in late July. We're also playing Bolder Summer Festival, Hampshire on August 8; Wickham Festival, Hampshire on August 9; and Purbeck Valley Folk Festival, Dorset on August 29.

www.tinderboxacoustic.com



ISOBEL KIMBERLEY

STYLE... (PROGRESSIVE FOLK)

Bruise formed in London 15 years ago. I am the singer, songwriter and guitarist and my partner Jim Kimberley is the drummer and producer. Our music lies somewhere between folk and prog, with strong melodies and inventive arrangements. Our album *In Animal Character* came out last year, and I feel it's a step forward in my songwriting. Many of the songs refer to change; change within relationships and personal change. 'Dreamland', [which featured on an *Acoustic Presents...* CD], was inspired by a visit to Margate before the refurbishment of Dreamland amusement park was proposed. Though dishevelled, I found the site beautiful and atmospheric. I write all my songs on acoustic guitar – apart from my voice, it's my primary instrument. My regular guitar is a Taylor 518 14-fret grand orchestra electro with a Sitka spruce top, solid mahogany body and Taylor Expression System. I was impressed from the start and as it plays in I've just grown more fond – it's wonderful live and records beautifully. I never play in standard – my songs are based around two main tunings, DADGAD and CGCGCD. Jim generally plays in standard E and the chiming of the different inversions together is a major part of Bruise's sound. With drop tunings I want a big, bass sound and the Taylor has it in bucketloads. It's beautifully balanced, with a bright, crisp top end. I DI into the PA. We like the natural sound, so the only pedal I use is the Boss TU-2 Chromatic Tuner. I play both pick and fingerstyle – I'm pretty fired up about how my fingerpicking has developed – and have recently changed the picks I use from a midweight bass to Jim Dunlop .60mm and .46mm. I've grown much closer to my folk routes recently, so we've been recording arrangements of some real English/Scots traditional songs with a view to releasing an EP in October. Upcoming dates? In September we're at On Blackheath and Burnham Folk Festival as well as our regular tour circuit.

www.bruiseuk.com

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We meet up with Bill Collings – famed US luthier behind Collings Guitars – in Sarzana, Italy, to talk about the latest range of acoustics coming out of Austin, Texas: the Depression-era influenced Waterloo Guitars.

Words by Stephen Bennett Images by Collings Gutars

There's something of the Texas outlaw about Bill Collings. Maybe it's the half-amused glint in his eye; a cunning ruse to lull the unwary into thinking he won't suddenly reach for his six-shooter and plug you before you can blink.

Fortunately, the old medieval fortress of Sarzana in Italy, where our posse catches up with him, only resembles the Alamo via the occasional bullet hole in the wall. Bill's here at the annual Acoustic Guitar Gathering on a more peaceful mission to promote his latest project, in the shape of the new "Waterloo" line, and represent a brand which has come to epitomise an unlikely notion: that it's still possible to deliver, top-notch, hand-made quality while increasing production to factory-output levels.

Bill eases into the guitar chat slowly. He's just as keen to talk cars, his other great passion,

and the fact that he really wouldn't mind being out on the West Coast right now working on a hot-rod with his old pal, Bobby, who's had to settle for Jeff Beck's help, instead. Cars, guitars... in a way, they're all the same to Bill Collings. He comes from a long line of engineers; great uncle Alexander Winton built and sold the first \$1,000 car in the US and used to beat the young Henry Ford in races, if not in historical significance. It's in the blood. Collings is an avid collector of not just vintage cars, but classic British motorbikes, from BSAs and Triumphs to rare Nortons and Velocettes. It's clearly a rough gig all round but then, Bill's doing it so that we don't have to. He can trace a line of inventors, bridge builders and chemists right back to Edinburgh in the mid-1800s; explaining the whole familial *raison d'être* with a precision-engineer's economy – 'we like... stuff'. Collings claims his "I'll build anything"

second-nature grew from the fact that 'it was just so easy because I was always around it'. And as a kid growing up, what could be cooler than those twin, iconic symbols of 20th century American design culture? 'Cars and guitars? Oh, yeah. Working, cutting the grass? Not cool. See, this really isn't work for me.'

Collings' first explorations in guitar making took him from Ohio to Houston in the mid-1970s. While "gainfully employed" making oil-field parts in a local machine shop, he started building a banjo on his kitchen table with a few limited hand tools. From there, having accumulated a few parts from the newly-established Stew-Mac emporium (just round the corner) he got his hands on some Brazilian rosewood and set to work on a guitar that 'took about a year in my head but only a few weeks in real terms'. If all that sounds a mite



The Waterloo brand is all about capturing the voice and spirit of the very best Depression-era guitars in well-made and very playable instruments.

primitive, it certainly didn't deter the likes of Lyle Lovett (who once interviewed Collings as part of his college journalism course) and it soon turned out, as is so often the way, that he was in the right place at the right time. The artsy, downtown, Montrose area of Houston had begun to attract a new bohemian crowd whose leading lights such as Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt, Nanci Griffith et al were about to embark on their soon-to-be stellar musical trajectories. Collings wandered into a club one night and button-holed the renowned local player, Rick Gordon, telling him, 'I'm a guitar maker'. Gordon asked Bill how many he'd made so far. 'Oh, about 50,' came the instant, only-forty-nine-off-the-truth reply and Collings justifies the ploy with the perfectly reasonable, 'I needed some credibility, fast'. Gordon called in at the kitchen, played Bill's (only) guitar and bought the next

one "off the production line" by agreeing to pay for all the building materials. Word soon spread. Within days Collings had 10 orders. Rick Gordon, meanwhile, still owns and plays that first ever "made for sale" model.

Before long, he'd befriended the Austin luthiers Tom Ellis and Mike Stevens, and moved on, to what was the next burgeoning Texas music scene, to share their workshop space (and expanded tool-kit). Nonetheless, Bill reckons the late-70s weren't good years for acoustic guitar music; 'it was all that electrified, synthesiser stuff'. Alongside which, the small companies risked being swamped by the Martin/Gibson monopoly - people wanted "the names" - and he's happy to credit the rise of Taylor guitars with the change of mind-set that, by the mid-1980s, allowed him to take the big leap into building flat-tops, arch-tops (and a big reputation) out on

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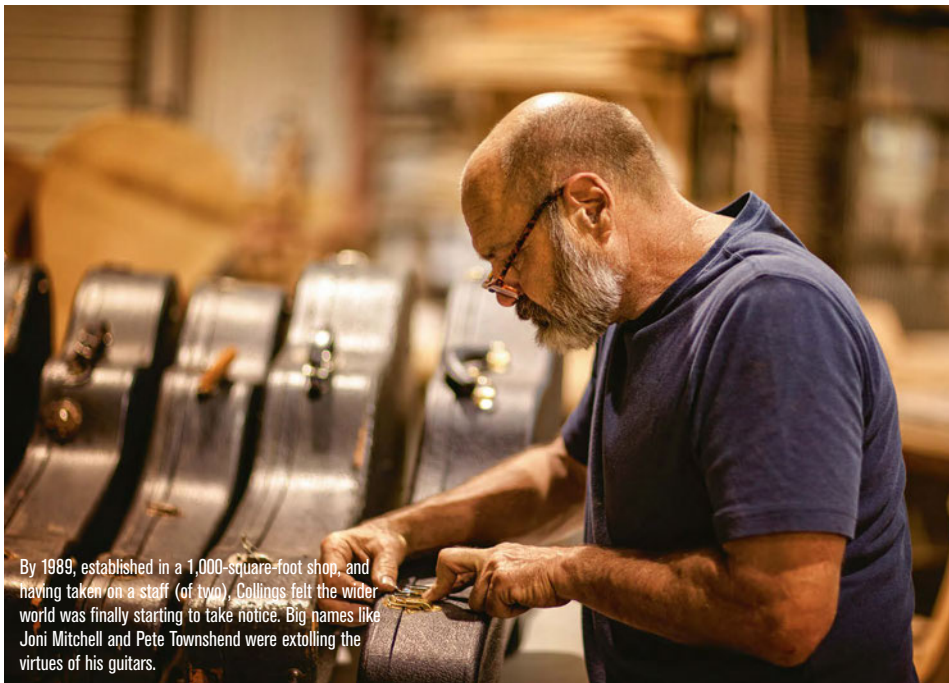
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Collings may well have his timing spot-on, once again, with the Waterloo range, as so much of the current acoustic guitar world is in thrall to the dusty delights of lo-fi, David Rawlings-style Americana.



By 1989, established in a 1,000-square-foot shop, and having taken on a staff (of two), Collings felt the wider world was finally starting to take notice. Big names like Joni Mitchell and Pete Townshend were extolling the virtues of his guitars.

his own. By 1989, established in a 1,000-square-foot shop, and having taken on a staff (of two), Collings felt the wider world was finally starting to take notice. Big names like Joni Mitchell and Pete Townshend were extolling the virtues of his guitars and the original, kitchen-based operation just carried on growing like a Texas hogweed, so much so that the 2005 (and current) Austin incarnation, features a raft of CNC technology, 50-odd full-time employees and new lines in ukuleles, mandolins and electrics, all of which, Bill insists, carry that same stamp of hand-finished, craftsman quality that marked his earliest output. Otherwise, as he maintains, 'what's the point?'

Bill Collings is acutely conscious of any possible accusation of quality-control being lost as a small-build company expands its output (his operation currently produces around 1,500 flat-tops a year, plus 500 mandolins, 1,000 electrics and most recently, a thousand Waterloo models – his latest pet-project). 'That's a fear,' he admits, 'and it mustn't happen. But...you can't pass work up so it's a tough deal.'

What's retained is a determination not to compromise. Collings is convinced a lot of small builders would love to make more instruments but the trick is in the "how" – without losing what drew the buyer in the first place. He insists, for Collings Guitars, that's been easy. For him, 'the hard part is playing the damn things.' Making things is what he does. Bill's genius is (simply?) in making things as he reiterates in his endearingly non-magical mantra – 'it's just what I do.'

From somewhere deep within the turbulent waters of this hand-made versus machine-produced debate, emerges the latest Collings line; the Waterloo and Bill's keen to explain the overall philosophy behind what will inevitably be regarded as his budget range but which he's

adamant will forge a particular brand respect and affection all of its own. Basically, it's all down to his enduring fascination with Depression-era guitars. Collings is convinced many of the cheap (and cheaply produced) guitars from that period were fine instruments that, nowadays, suffer reputation-wise from both the dubious evidence of limited recording techniques and the fact that so few of them have made it, intact, into the 21st century. They were made very quickly and boasted few frills; everything stripped-down to keep costs likewise. Collings believes their sound is characterised by a certain "unruliness," an unrefined, yet-to-mature quality (the teenagers of the guitar world, then) with that dry, airy attack so specific to the ladder-braced instruments of the period. He's even reviving the hand-brushed varnish approach, delighting in the shock-horror reaction that's bound to receive from the finish-Nazis. 'Companies virtually gave those guitars away just to stay in business but the woods were good, as were the construction methods.'

He chose the name not, sadly, to reflect the demise of Napoleon (who passed through Sarzana himself on many occasions) but because it carries an echo of Kalamazoo, the one-time Gibson off-shoot that provides a stylistic template for the new line, and because he discovered, after toying with the name (and how serendipitous is this?) that his headquarters town of Austin was actually called Waterloo before changing its name in 1850.

Collings may well have his timing spot-on, once again, with the Waterloo range, as so much of the current acoustic guitar world is in thrall to the dusty delights of lo-fi, David Rawlings-style Americana. Seekers after the roots music truth crave that raw yet eloquent sound the old fingerstyle blues, swing and country players

served up between getting thrown off trains and into jails and Collings believes the pared-down aesthetic is something guitarists 'just naturally get'. He's been quoted elsewhere as saying, 'I wanted to bring back the voice of some of these old depression-era guitars in an instrument that will actually play.'

They look good, too; vintage, sepia-photograph Stellas, re-born. Nonetheless, it took him a while to convince his employees of the artistic merits of this new/old direction. They were, naturally enough, worried that the hard-won Collings brand name might suffer. In fact, something of the opposite seems to have happened. With so much faith already invested in the Collings reputation, the Waterloo line has been bestowed with an instant credibility that Bill himself is determined won't be taken for granted. One indicator of this non-negotiable ethic is his insistence that none of the production will go overseas. It all stays in Austin, sticking to that Sears-Roebuck catalogue, Kalamazoo aesthetic running alongside the boss's guarantee that Collings will always be a one-at-a-time maker, no matter how far the range expands. The trick for the man himself will be to avoid any of the tweaking, top-shaving and brace-altering that would interfere with the more-affordable Waterloo's strictly back-to-basics mission statement. For an obsessive mechanical meddler like Bill, who just can't keep his hands off 'all that stuff', it won't be easy but the player can always rest assured that if it leaves the Collings factory it's as good a job of work as he can make it. And as Bill points out, with a proper craftsman's lack of pretension, a brand new Collings isn't really a guitar yet, anyway – 'but you can be pretty damn sure it soon will be'.

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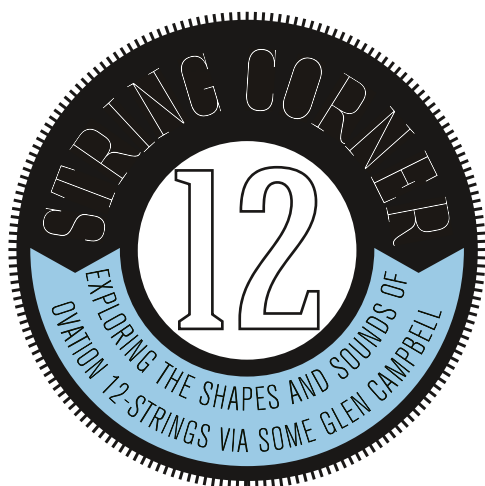


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Back in the early 70s when I was plying my trade as a lead guitarist/vocalist, I bought my first 12-string acoustic for the grand sum of £40. It was a Kay and came with a blue hardshell case. After catching the bug from British blues 12-string legend John Joyce, I decided to have a go myself. John showed me some basic fingerpicking techniques and off I went. After about a year of dabbling and scratching my head over which style and techniques to adopt, I came up with a thread that led me to develop my own style of solo 12-string playing. I then recorded the first 12-string guitar suite entitled *Earth Birth* for an independent label I was part of together with Ralph Steadman and Michael Tickner who owned Dawes Press. Amazingly, RCA records heard the album and signed me up on a four-album deal in 1977. After the first album, I looked around for other 12-string models but there weren't many on the market that suited my style of playing. John played a 1960s Guild F212 and this suited his blues style well, but it didn't suit me. Also, I had started using a live band on my next albums, taking the impetus away from the solo genre and using a 12-string with a wider line up.

It was then that the revolutionary Ovation guitars came on the market and included in their offerings was a 12-string. They were revolutionary in concept as the bodies were made of a substance they developed called Lyrachord, which was made up of interwoven layers of glass filament and a bonding resin. This could be moulded to the body shape and actually gave the guitar's projection a really strong sound and quite a bit more sustain than all-wood constructed 12-strings at the time. The tops were solid wood and add to that the unique shape of the design, here was a formula that attracted many guitarists. I fell under their spell for a while and purchased what became known as the Glen Campbell model.

Speaking recently with Gordon Giltrap, he too played an Ovation and endorsed it for a period. I found the 12-string to be a different beast to my Kay and it suited the band format well as it cut through more, especially when amplified. One

OVATION 12-STRING TAB

♩ = 200

PAUL BRETT



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of the inherent problems with the bowl back design was that it wasn't easy to balance against the body and it would slide away from the lap if you weren't careful. Some players would attach an abrasive material under the part of the body that rests on the thigh to stop slippage in the sitting position. Of course, like all new concepts in design, it was swiftly copied by all manner of brands though none managed to come close to Ovation's standards.

A word here, too, for Glen Campbell... Most people know him for his songs and long-time collaboration with composer Jimmy Webb. Hits like 'Wichita Lineman', 'Galveston', 'By The Time I Get To Phoenix' and many others propelled Glen to global fame, but he actually plied his trade for years as a session guitarist – and a very good one

at that – who was much in demand. He also played 12-string guitar and has several albums out in that genre. He covered some traditional tunes such as 'Cotton Fields', 'Walk Right In', and 'If I Had A Hammer' among others. That apart, the Ovation design, of which Campbell had a major input, still remains an iconic part of the guitar's historical timeline.

I've included a tab in open minor tuning – for digital readers, I've recorded this using an Ovation and you can get the audio files and video, to see and hear an Ovation 12 in action in its raw acoustic form. The second exercise, in standard tuning, is a more traditional blues tune for you to get into and can be downloaded from the website.

Paul Brett



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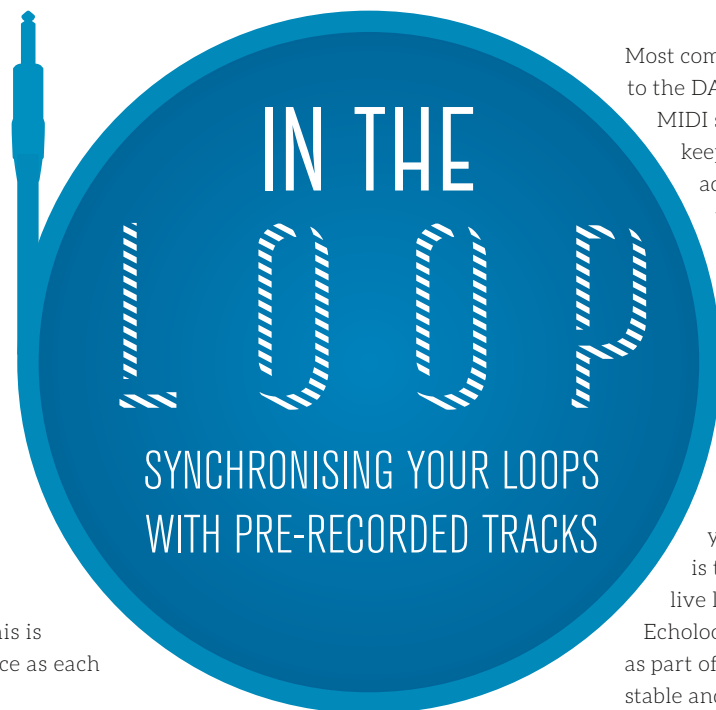
Special Guest

Elliott Randall (Steely Dan)

For some people, a loop pedal and a guitar provides enough sound for an entire live gig – perhaps even for the basis of a career. Some people, however, want to sync the loops up with either a drum machine or a digital audio workstation running on a laptop computer. Loops alone are exciting but sometimes it's useful to play alongside a larger arrangement provided by some kind of backing track. Live looping parts can help to make a pre-recorded backing track seem less static and more interesting; you can improvise and change your parts as you go and this is much more exciting for the audience as each performance can be different.

There are various different ways you can get live loops to play in time alongside pre-recorded backing tracks. You can connect a hardware looper to a digital audio workstation (DAW) running on a computer using software such as Logic, Pro Tools or Ableton Live. This is the modern equivalent of a tape-based studio, but it can have infinite numbers of takes and runs within

the computer. This is done via a MIDI input on the loop pedal that can sync to a MIDI clock supplied by the DAW running on the computer. The MIDI clock is sent out by a midi device or piece of software for sync purposes. Some DAWs such as Ableton Live are capable of creating and receiving midi clocks so that they can sync to your loops.



Most commonly, the loop pedal acts as a slave to the DAW and can quantise the loop to the MIDI signal coming from the computer to keep everything perfectly in time. The actual process for setting this up varies from loop pedal to loop pedal but the Pigtronix Infinity, Electro-Harmonix 2880, Boss RC-300 and various others have some kind of MIDI sync capability. It's probably best to try a few different loop pedals before you decide what to buy. Look up reviews and compare the various specifications.

Another way of synchronising your loops with pre-recorded tracks is to use a VST plug-in software-based live looping program such as Mobius or Echoloop which runs within the computer as part of the DAW as an effect. You'll need a stable and fast computer and audio interface that is capable of processing audio in real time to keep the loops and DAW locked in. The loops should automatically be in sync with the tempo of the backing track as they are running within the computer. Often, these can be controlled by an external hardware foot controller in the same way as a regular looper pedal. The digital audio workstation Ableton Live includes a looper plug-in built into it and many people recommend this approach.

Another option is to play to a metronome until you can record loops in time to the beat without using the MIDI sync. This is very difficult, but can be done. As ever, practice is the key; the more hours you spend playing along to a click, the better it will be. The problem with this method is if you are a millisecond out with your loops, your performance will go more and more out of sync as it goes on.

In this month's tab, we will take a simple electronic melody that we'll play on our backing track and then add loops over the top. The original part is quite static. Using live loops, we'll add some life to the arrangement.

Example 1 is a melody, originally played on a bell sample on a synthesiser on our backing track. I've tabbed it out here for an acoustic guitar. It's a simple melodic part in the key of A minor. This is purely for the process of showing the technique of live looping over a pre-recorded backing track and this could be a drum beat, a keyboard part or any kind of more complicated arrangement. When creating your backing track, try to use sounds that blend well with the sound of your guitar within the context of the arrangement.

Example 2 is the loop we're going to play along to the melody using our sync'd up

EXAMPLE 1

Standard tuning

♩ = 80

S-Gt

mf
let ring

T
A
B

EXAMPLE 2

Standard tuning

♩ = 80

S-Gt

mf
let ring

T
A
B

live looping set-up. The chords are Asus2, B minor #5, C7 minor (no 5th) and, finally, an Ab diminished. The diminished chord adds a bit of tension as a substitution for the regular E7 chord that leads back into the Asus2 chord at the start of the sequence. Some dissonance can really spice up a melodic chord sequence as long as you resolve it with the next chord in the progression. You should already have your looping system sync'd to your backing track via one of the methods we have previously discussed so that when you hit loop record it will be quantised to the tempo of **example 1**. Record the loop in from **example 2**, and then we'll start to add more layers.

In **example 3**, we'll put down a jangly part based on an A minor 7 chord played at the twelfth fret; very slow and simple. This is purely designed to build tension as we build things up. Hit loop record on your loop pedal and add **example 3** over our backing track (**example 1**) and the loop we recorded over it in **example 2** that should already be playing.

Next, we're going to record in another layer as shown in **example 4** which is based on an A minor 9 arpeggio. Ninth chords are great for layering as they create a melodic lift. Now we have multiple guitar loops playing alongside our pre-recorded track from **example 1**.

These techniques will help to make your MIDI sync'd backing tracks more exciting live, but looping isn't only of use at gigs. Live looping when sync'd to a DAW can allow you to stack harmony guitar parts instantly while playing along to recorded arrangements. Live



MATT STEVENS

Instrumental Composer

Matt Stevens is a musician and composer from London. An instrumental artist, he uses an acoustic guitar and sampler to create multi-layered tracks live. His music has been described as "a guitar orchestra". He plays live all over the UK and listens to Sonic Youth, Carcass, Nick Drake, Cardiacs and King Crimson. He is constantly recording new music for several projects.

www.mattstevensguitar.com

looping is great for inspiring new ideas in any musical context. Loops often open up new creative avenues you weren't expecting.

There are many brilliant artists combining acoustic guitars with laptops and other technology such as live looping – check them out on YouTube and let yourself be inspired.

Matt Stevens

EXAMPLE 3

Standard tuning

♩ = 80



EXAMPLE 4

Standard tuning

♩ = 80



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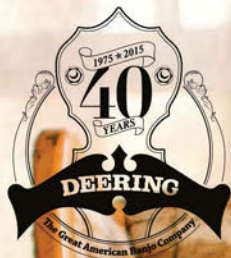
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ALBORADA

RAYMOND BURLEY

Classical Guitarist

Raymond Burley is an accomplished classical guitarist, composer and arranger. One of his most recent projects was the album *Double Vision* – a collection of Giltrap pieces arranged for two guitars.

www.raymondburley.com

I'd like to take you through another short work by the 19th century Spanish guitarist and composer Francisco Tárrega, the novelty piece 'Alborada'. There are many published editions of the piece and unfortunately they vary, sometimes quite considerably. The title usually appears as 'Alborada' (Dawn) or 'La Alborada'; some have the subtitle 'Capricho' (Caprice) – others have 'Cajita de Musica' (Music Box). Certainly the clever effect first appearing in bar seven is very reminiscent of a music box but is this Tárrega's subtitle or could it be the work of an imaginative publisher? This is a piece I'd almost forgotten about until it came up in a recent conversation with Gordon Giltrap.

The version shown here is the one I played many years ago. I'll point out some of the main differences and leave you to make your own decisions. In the second chord of the first full bar (and its repetitions), some editions have A

Andante

TÁRREGA

⑥ to D

simile

1, 2

3

4

5

6

7

8

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10

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13

14

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as the bottom note rather than the G sharp shown here. Bar five, in this version, has the bass notes A followed by D; other editions show both notes as A. Another alternative appears on the second beat of bar 10 – in other editions you may see the notes (from the top) C sharp, A, E and C sharp instead of the more consistent E, C sharp, A and E shown here. Are these misprints or is it a case of “Chinese whispers” with one edition influencing another – correct or incorrect – as they’re passed down through the years? We may never know.

As you’ll see, the guitar’s sixth string is lowered to D. Other than the lovely music box effect there are not too many technical problems. Tárrega’s music was written during a period where the portamento or glissando (glide) was commonplace:

singers, violinists and cellists were using it to great effect. In this day and age some might consider these to be slightly vulgar but they are an essential part of the music. To leave them out is not unlike omitting embellishments in baroque music. If these decorations are performed tastefully they can be extremely effective. How are they executed? In the first full bar there is a high A on the second string sliding rapidly down to a C sharp on the same string (tenth fret to second fret); the A is played together with the bass note and the C sharp is sounded by the left hand alone as it arrives at the second note. The aim should be to hear the two notes clearly with no other pitches in between; other slurs (ligados) in the piece are performed in the usual way.

On to the music box effect: the

upper notes are performed by the left hand alone and the problem here is achieving clarity and evenness. The first note of each group is achieved by hammering the string against the fret – the right hand will be busy elsewhere. The following two notes are slurred in the usual way. The harmonics in the lower part are performed exclusively by the right hand and there are two options: the *i* finger touches the harmonic point indicated and the *a* finger plucks the string, alternatively the thumb can pluck the string. You can even use a combination of the two, particularly if you find the “swishing” sound of the *a* fingernail unpleasant when playing the bass strings. In each case, the string required is shown as its open pitch. For example, the first harmonic in bar seven is found at

the sixteenth fret on the fifth string (A). It’s advisable to work on the two techniques separately before combining them – coordination will be another problem to address in these passages.

A further point worth mentioning is the upward slide from E to A across bars 12 and 13; this time both notes are played by the right hand. It’s not particularly difficult but it’s always safest to look at the note you’re intending to arrive at to avoid over-shooting, or falling short of, the required fret. There are other examples in the piece.

There was a time when ‘Alborada’ was performed quite frequently; curiously it seems to have been rested in more recent years. I hope you enjoy it.

[Raymond Burley](#)

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Mike Dawes is an acclaimed globetrotter and wizard impersonator working with the Candyrat label. His solo work has seen him perform in all corners of the world and his studio CV includes sessions with the likes of Gotye and Newton Faulkner. He is also the right-hand axe man to Justin Hayward of the Moody Blues and is usually sat in some airport writing for us here at *Acoustic* magazine.

In this issue, we'll be continuing our look at my Celtic fingerstyle piece 'Somewhere Home'. In the last issue we looked at the main theme. This theme happens three times in the song; it's fairly lengthy and there are variations upon each repetition. In this issue we will look at the variations in the first repetition, we will also look at the bridge in the middle of the song.

'Somewhere Home' is the fifth track on my album *What Just Happened?* and it is in DADGAD tuning with a capo on the second fret. Note: you will need the previous column to make complete sense of the variations. If you do not have the previous issue do try and track down the album version of the piece or find the column on the *Acoustic* magazine website.

'SOMEWHERE HOME'

PART TWO OF MIKE'S CELTIC FINGERSTYLE PIECE

Capo 2

Variation 1

$\text{♩} = 80$ $\text{♩} = 90$

mf

TAB

9 9 <12> 11 9 4 (4) 0 0 2 4 4 2 0 0 2 0 2 0 2 4 5
0 6 <12> 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
5 2 0 0 5 4 2 4 5

Variation 2

The musical score for Variation 2 consists of three staves. The top staff is for guitar, written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 2/4 time signature. It contains a melodic line with various ornaments and a bass line with sustained notes. The middle staff is a TAB (Tuning, Action, Bends) staff, showing fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) and specific techniques like bends (marked with 'b' and a curved arrow) and vibrato (marked with a 'v' and a wavy line). The bottom staff is for percussion, showing a 3/4 time signature and a 4/4 time signature, with a single note in the first measure of the 3/4 section.

About one third of the way through the theme, during the first repetition, we encounter our first major variation. Take a look at the third bar of example two from the previous column. Here, we have three bars of variation based around two distinctive bends on the top string. The first bend integrates into the harmonic sequence we already talked about. The second bend packs a serious punch when played with a subtle *rallentando*. This then resolves to a lovely *Gmaj7* voicing with its own *fermata* (short pause/breath). Note that our previous free time feel has now changed to a more steady rhythm, largely in 6/8 time.



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Ex1 $\text{♩} = 144$

VARIATION 2: MAIN THEME OUTRO

So this isn't technically a variation as the equivalent bars don't exist,

but this arpeggiated outro acts as the finale of the whole song and it's first introduced here, at the end of the

second cycle of the main theme.

You'll recognise the first few notes here, but we quickly move

into a steady 4/4 arpeggio sequence drifting up through the major scale. The tricky part is the raked harmonic chord at the end. To achieve this you must fret the chord with your left hand, place your right index finger above the nineteenth fret on the top string, position your second fingernail on the string and in one smooth motion, rake the chord above or parallel with the fret itself in a downstroke.

It sounds like a complicated extended technique; it's commonly utilised by gypsy jazz and flamenco musicians, among others.

EXAMPLE 1

Here is the full bridge transition. This slow and spacious part of the piece starts the steady build up to the fast and super fun jig in the middle of the piece. We will be looking at that next time.

This section is pretty straightforward when compared with some of the other pieces we have looked at. We start with some nice legato phrases over the first few bars. Artificial harmonics begin at the end of the first line. As mentioned in previous columns, I achieve these harmonics by "fretting" with *i* and picking with *m*.

Pay attention to the seventh/eighth bars in this exercise. The tap slide remains fretted while *m* picks the top string. The second string twelfth fret harmonic is natural but the hands are inverted. The left hand is fretting the harmonic and it is "picked" by pulling off the tapped note. The sixth string harmonic is natural and normal.

Enjoy the "James Bond chord" at the end of this section! Congratulations on getting this far folks. Next time, we'll look at the furious jig chaos. This is my favourite part of the song and I can't wait to share it.

Mike Dawes

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CHRIS GIBBONS

Composer

Chris is not only a guitar teacher but also a composer and producer who has worked on many orchestration for television and recordings alike. He has many years of experience both in performance and helping others develop their playing potential to its best.

www.chrisgibbonsmusic.co.uk

It's fair to say that there is a lineage in certain guitar styles, and in each "dynasty" certain players emerge that epitomise the style of that era and influence all that follows, while still embracing the heritage of those that preceded.

Some of the styles we hear are born of artistic and creative developments and trends in musical fashion. Other styles are born out of necessity, the fitting of a pickup and playing single note lines developed as a need for the big band guitarist to compete on his own terms with the horn players.

In the realm of country guitar, there are many categories gathered under the umbrella of that term; bluegrass, country blues, chicken pickin', Travis style and so on.

In the first of a series of six articles, I'll take you from the basics of the style right up to some more technically challenging pieces of music. You'll be able to move from a country beginner to developing and mastering the structure of country

guitar playing. In this issue, we'll look at the style made popular by Maybelle Carter of the Carter Family. To provide the fullest possible

sound, especially for occasions when only one guitar accompanied the voices, Maybelle used a thumb pick and a single fingerpick to

strum the chords while using the thumb to pick out bass and other melodic decorations.

We will approach this style in

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Ex. 1

7

12

Ex. 2

17

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2
23

28

33 Ex. 3

39

44

the context of a beginner's class by using a flat-pick or plectrum rather than finger and thumb initially, as it's relatively easy to get a strong

sound without too many tangles.

There are three stages to learn in this first item: picking a bass note and then strumming a chord, using

alternating bass notes, and using runs to connect the bass note of one chord to another.

In all cases, we will use just three

simple chords, G, C and D.

In **example one**, we start with a simple "boom-chang" rhythm; the notes are played with a down-pick (the little square 'hat' above the notes) for the first eight bars before changing the rhythm pattern to a "boom-chang-a" where the bass note is played with a down-pick and then a down and up strum (the V arrow means an upstroke).

In **example two**, we alternate the bass note, as would be the style of a country band bass player flipping between the root of the chord and the fifth of the chord.

In **example three** we add some connecting runs between the chords to add a little more zip and zest to the changes; these require more concentration and dexterity to keep the lines clean and free of clunks.

The art here in all these examples is to separate the single string you need to pick for the bass from all the other strings; to do this play really slowly at first making sure the bass note is clear and that you don't accidentally whack another string by mistake. A medium size pick is best for this type of work.

Play through the examples at a slow metronome setting, say 70bpm and gradually increase the tempo to around 130bpm when you can play it through without any mistakes! If you are starting out on guitar, this is a fairly straightforward and rewarding style to master, and if you have been playing a while and confine yourself to strumming only, this will improve your options when performing.

Chris Gibbons



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RICHARD GILEWITZ

Fingerstyle Guitarist, Composer, and Educator

Richard Gilewitz is a lively entertainer of six- and 12-string finger gymnastics. His signature style delivers a technical diversity of blending the classical field with the steel string world to create an exploration of fingerstyle guitar, with over three decades of well-honed experience.

www.richardgilewitz.com

Of all the subjects I could possibly pick to write about, why on earth would I subject myself to spilling my largely uneducated guts on the guitar string and go down the copper vs bronze trail? Well, after conducting over 2,000 guitar seminars, clinics and workshops, and having attended at least three cocktail parties, the number one question is always about guitar strings.

Repeatedly, I have asked myself why this question is such a big deal. The deeper I dug, the more obvious it became because it is a great question. My yack-a-doodles come from a user's standpoint. I did not invent the guitar string. However, I sure have used enough of them for about 40 years on a couple of dozen instruments ranging from the ukulele to the banjo, the electric to

the six- and 12-string steel-strung and Weissenborn to the classical.

I've also been extremely privileged to have toured a lot around the globe. After subjecting many instruments with different strings to all kinds of conditions, I've been able to identify some tendencies; weather and airlines being just a few. Keep in mind these only pertain to my personal experiences. Everyone's finger juice, callouses and DNA may vary, depending on your diet, genes, and whether or not you frown or smile when you play. There's almost no joke in some of that dribble. According to an old friend of mine, who I once saw wearing gloves while playing a guitar, everyone's acidity level in their fingers is slightly different and can affect the life of a string. So when you catch yourself passing the ole guitar around the room at a party, realise that besides getting some of whatever they're eating on your strings, the acidity level, callous level, and applied pressure levels might all play a factor in depleting your string's effective existence on the planet.

I recall many a day and night at the local coffeehouse during my college years in Alabama and at countless parties where passing a guitar around the room was the norm. After all, music is supposed to be a social event. However, if you're about to play at Carnegie Hall in New York or ready to walk into the studio, keeping your instrument to yourself is not a bad idea. Also,

please always ask someone if you can check out their instrument.

I would never select strings for another player but I do have some considerations, as I'd like to call them, regarding what strings you might choose. A lot of it, but not all, depends on your application. Some of it simply depends on your personal choice for no other reason than you like the sound they create, similarly to ordering food in a restaurant. an you really say why you do or don't like coconut or mushrooms *besides* the fact that you do or don't like them? So, here's my rundown...

Bright bronze strings produce a more vibrant and shimmering tone that might be preferable if you're playing in a band and want to be heard over the banjo.

Phosphor bronze are just a step down in the brightness department and are pretty much my general preference, in particular the coated, extended life strings because of the travel and multiple environments I'm subjected to during tours.

D'Addario strings new NYXL coated strings are my current favorite since, as they accurately state, the tuning stability is actually that apparent.

Flat wound strings are generally reserved to special circumstances. I do recall a time I was in the studio with microphones, which proved to be even more sensitive than me (not possible). The flat wound strings gave me the sound I was after without any finger noise or squeak and sizzle.

Silk and Steel strings are another

type of string I use. There was an instance several years ago, while recovering from spinal surgery due to a car accident; I was barely able to play for a few months. My callouses went to callous heaven and I was relegated to playing on a ukulele (my current favorite instrument) and a papoose guitar. The Silk and Steel range of strings worked perfectly in a therapeutic sense since I did not require a big punch. I just wanted to play again. I could carry on at this point down a long list, but I'd rather just make a brief mention in regards to other strings and a couple of more considerations.

For nylon string guitarists, a key preference deals with a normal or hard tension depending on your attack, repertoire, instrument, and as I've said before preference.

I've been playing a 12-string guitar most of my guitar life and I'm elated that D'Addario Strings has the **EJ37** set which comes complete with a wound 22 gauge octave fifth string. In addition, the heavier gauge with a 12-54 top and bottom allows me to pitch the instrument down a step and a half from standard concert pitch, which is where I prefer to hear that instrument.

Obviously, there are strings available for banjos, ukuleles, banjoleles, mandolins, electric guitars and so on, but I'd prefer to have spoken about my personal experiences. Your choice may fluctuate throughout the years depending on so many variables, but for now see where you are. Ask yourself where you were and why

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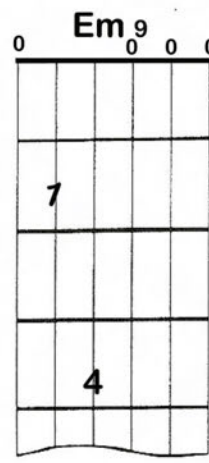
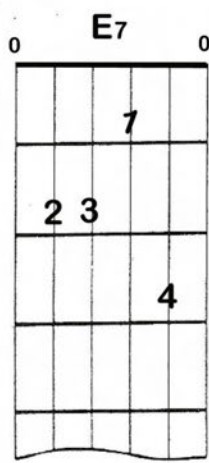
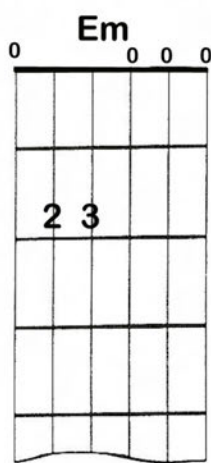
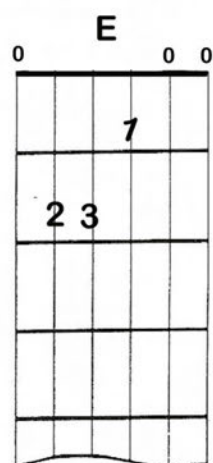
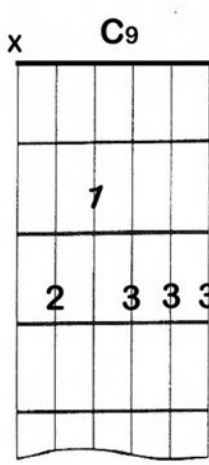
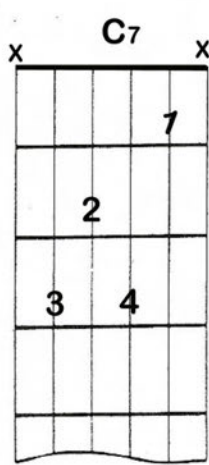
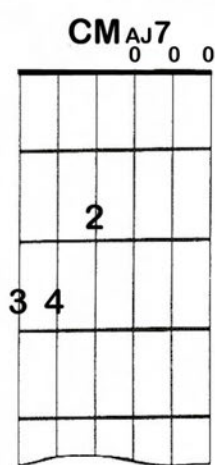
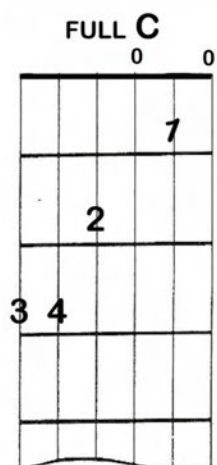
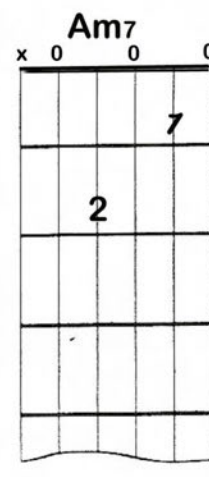
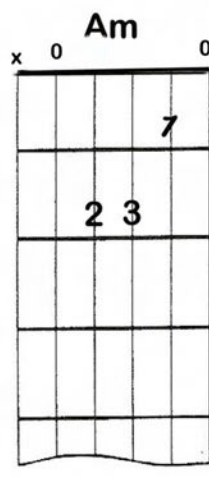
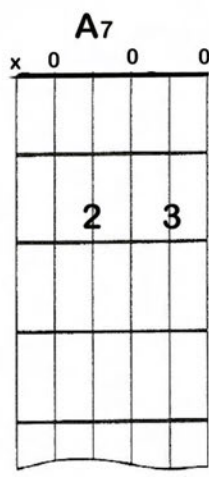
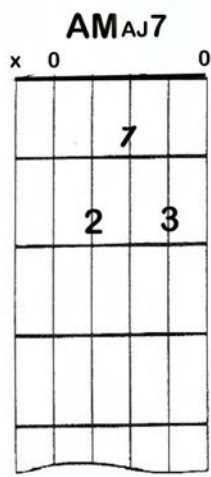
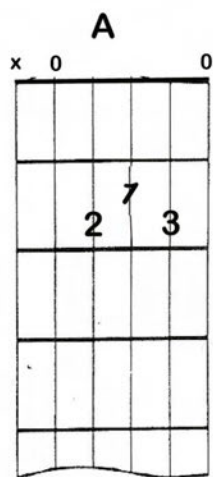
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you might have either changed or stayed right where you are and keep the door open for future variations in your choice. The main thing is to be conscious of the fact that there are choices for very intriguing and personal reasons and

that it's up to you to develop your own personalised string theory. Try some of these examples of a few chords with different types of strings and gauges. Simply pluck some of the strings briefly and listen. See how the sounds float out

for you, check their "sustain", ask yourself about your repertoire and what may suit you best.

Strum strings six through three, four through one, then all of them. But, wait in between the strikes. Listen in a quiet room and feel the

results with your body and not just the sound for your ears. Wait in between the strikes and vary the power attack. With so many parameters for testing the strings of your choice, just remember to consider your DNA, regions, action, attack, styles, climates, petri-dish, case goo, animal fur, stuffed animal fur, mood swings, pick vs. nail vs. flesh and facial expressions. Don't leave out fears, insecurities, and ego. Wait, aren't those all the same?

One of the best methods I've used over the years when testing strings for preference is to strum or pick just a single chord and listen. Once I strike the chord, I can decide on a few things. Do I want to use a staccato effect and stop the chord from ringing immediately or simply allow it to ring out? I also strike with different impacts – soft to medium to a hard strum. Another approach is to strum regionally, which means to only "punch" strum strings six-three or four-one. If you are playing one of the "movable" chords such as a C7 shape, I will be more likely to fingerpick those notes in the middle avoiding strings six and one. I will then move the shape up and down the neck for different chords. Take your time between strikes and most importantly, be sure your guitar is in tune before you start!

Richard Gilewitz

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Gordon Giltrap is pioneer of acoustic music in the UK. His extensive discography gives evidence of a skilled musician whose expertise lay in composition and arrangement. His pieces are played and enjoyed by young and old alike. www.giltrap.co.uk

I find revisiting old compositions fascinating – especially if it is a piece I haven't really looked at in quite some time. This month's piece in our DADGAD series is a prime example. After my friend and transcriber Mark Thomson has sent through the final thing I obviously go through it bar by bar. The main thing that occurs to me is this: what was my mindset when I first composed it? Was I focusing on certain aspects of my technique, or was I looking purely at creating a memorable tune? My guess is that we have a mixture of both here.

There is no point in saying there are some tricky and challenging passages here when in fact the whole thing, as far as I'm concerned, is challenging from start to finish. My lovely wife Hilary has often said, "Why do you make things so difficult and complicated?" and it's because that's what a particular

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2

and 55 where we have my typical signature "out of nowhere" hammer-ons.

I have always favoured a low action on all my instruments and will not go higher than an 11-gauge string set. The main reason is that I have never considered myself to have a particularly strong left hand technique, so both a low action and lighter strings help to execute these tricky passages for me.

The other tricky hammer section is in bars 26 and 27 where that bar leads smoothly into the next section. There is also a sneaky hammer on the fifth fret, sixth string so watch out for that. Bar 35 comes under the "tricky" heading as does bar 45 with the chromatic pull-off, which I must admit isn't easy. As a younger player I found them a piece of cake, but in old age, these fingers of mine don't quite work in the same way. There's an admission!

The final four bars I have always found interesting with their use of open and fretted notes to create that lovely flow. I have always experienced a sense of relief when I play those final bars, but also an immense feeling of satisfaction. I sincerely hope that you feel the same once you have got it under your fingers.

Gordon Giltrap

piece of music demands.

My friend Raymond Burley – who has created some cracking arrangements of my music for classical guitar in standard tuning – has often asked why I write in open tunings. The

answer is that, to me, it just sounds better. You cannot create the sustain and ringing tones with some of these tunes of mine in standard tuning – and, anyway, the tuning inspired the piece so that is surely

justification for doing so.

The title of this piece came from my wife who said it reminded her of a graceful racehorse. As I said, much of it is a tad challenging but I would like to look at bars eight, 16, 26



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LEGENDS

Jimmy Page

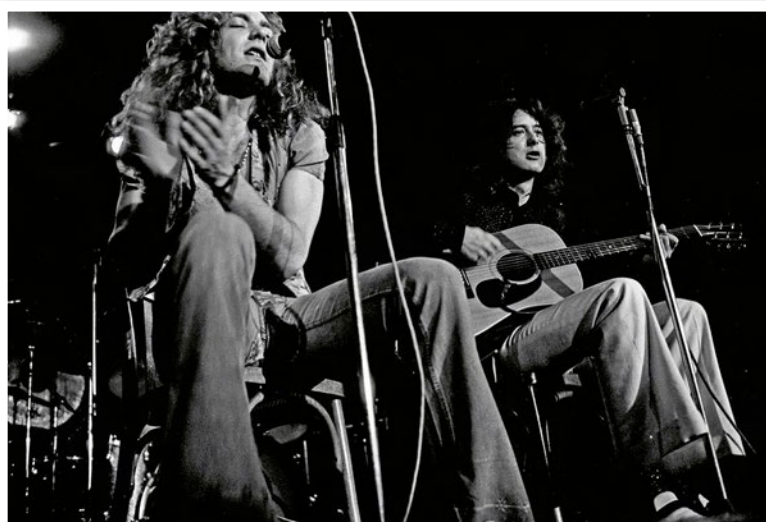
WORDS: TERI SACCONI

As one of the most venerated and versatile guitarists of the rock era, Jimmy Page is an undisputed giant of the electric guitar. Yet he is also a prolific and undersung master of the acoustic guitar.

Born James Patrick Page in suburban London in January 1944, he began his music pursuit as a choirboy.

He began on guitar playing skiffle and was self-taught; he became a session player on the London music scene of the early 60s while still a teen. Page rose to being the most in-demand session guitarist within a couple of years. He was recruited into the Yardbirds in 1966 and remained a member until he founded Led Zeppelin in 1968 which made him and the band stars straight out of the gate with their debut breakthrough album *Led Zeppelin*.

The first Zeppelin album is a tour de force not just for its raw authenticity with respect to the blues, it is a veritable touchstone for rock and metal musicians who've referenced it for more than 40 years. "We had so many colours and textures," is how Page aptly puts it. Yet for all the swagger and electric heaviness of Led Zeppelin, the breakthrough release also birthed his beguiling acoustic persona. The band's composer and producer, Jimmy exploited electric and acoustic guitars to offset and highlight each other seamlessly on the same albums and on some of the same songs. This fuelled Zeppelin's mastering the art of light and shade: from bombastic intensity to sublime subtlety (and back again) in a heartbeat. *Led Zeppelin* was a harbinger of what would come not only for the band, but also for Page's acoustic playing. He employed



a variety of tunings and alternate tunings – including DADGAD – over the years which are key to his acoustic articulation.

On the first album, Page's sweeping, acoustic fretwork is ushered in with 'Your Time Is Gonna Come'. It's bold, with an anthemic chorus (and a Hammond organ) but it's Jimmy's quieter, acoustic work and simple chord changes that make it such a visceral track. "Ultimately, I wanted Zeppelin to be a marriage of blues, hard rock and acoustic music topped with heavy choruses – a combination that had never been done before – and with lots of light and shade in the music." Examples of that would be 'Babe I'm Gonna Leave You' and 'Black Mountain Side' a traditional English folk song served up with shimmering acoustics.

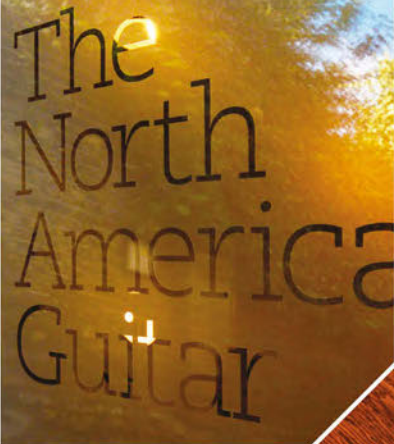
On *Led Zeppelin II*, the sound grew heavier, yet Page took a decidedly acoustic route on tracks such as 'Thank You' and 'Ramble On', but it was *Led Zeppelin III* where he really flexed his acoustic muscles. *III* includes unplugged masterpieces 'Friends' and 'Gallow's Pole', a traditional standard which benefits from Jimmy's haunting chord

changes and rhythmic guitar bounce, plus the presence of both mandolin and banjo. Other standout acoustic tracks are 'Tangerine' and 'That's The Way'. The latter track is a completely acoustic song, with Page playing an open tuning. 'Bron-Y-Aur Stomp' built on Page's acoustic bravado. These counterbalance the heavy rock and blues on the rest of the album. The aforementioned 'Tangerine' soars with Jimmy's acoustic simplicity and his solo here is concise and atmospheric.

Led Zeppelin IV further galvanised the band's global domination – it, too, mixed acoustic and electric guitars expertly. 'Stairway To Heaven' being the most lauded of the collection. Other standout acoustic tracks here include 'Going To California' and 'Battle Of Evermore'. On the latter, Jimmy uses his delicate touch on acoustic throughout the track (with the main riff played on mandolin).

Houses Of The Holy is another testament to his acoustic eclecticism evident on 'The Rain Song'. The acoustic is very subtle in this song, really a foundation for the electric guitar which is layered over the top – not really an acoustic song, more an electric/acoustic hybrid, but a great example of Page's talents as arranger, creating layers of richness, with the acoustic as a primary foundation.

The double album *Physical Graffiti* which many fans deem Zeppelin's finest set contained two acoustic tracks: 'Boogie With Stu' and 'Black Country Woman'. The final two Zeppelin albums contained none of Jimmy's acoustic playing, yet, retrospectively, his unplugged canon stands shoulder to shoulder with his electric contributions. ■



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